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## TEMPLES, CHURCHES & MOSQUES

BY

MR. YAKUB HASAN

In this remarkable volume, Mr. Yakub Hasan takes us through the Chaldean to Roman, Greek and Egyptian temples, to Buddhist Monuments and the temples of the Far East in all their variety and splendour. The reader finds himself face to face, now with the pyramids of Egypt or Parthenon of Athens, now gazing at the dizzy domes of St. Mark's or St. Peter's, now passing through the corridor of the Rameswaram temple, or admiring the golden flooring of the Sheodagon Pagoda, now stupefied by the height and immensity of the Kutab or lulled into a beautiful vision by the delicate craftsmanship of the Taj.

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G. A. Natesan & Co., Publishers, Madras.

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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**S**WAMI VIVEKANANDA used to say that wherever a European found a spot of more than usual beauty or magnificence he at once built a hotel at the place to attract tourists, while a Hindu would erect a temple on the top of mountains and the confluence of rivers to invite pilgrims. That is typical of the Hindu as distinguished from the European way. The Hindu mind is habitually turned to the ways of religion and worship, and the whole of this beautiful land of Bharata is studded with temples and places of worship. Every attractive spot in India is dedicated to God in one form or another and a temple is erected in memory of some Saint or Sadhu. Nor are dreary and deserted regions neglected, as the blessings of Providence are all the more imperative in such places. Thus the whole country from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, and from the Indus to the Brahmaputra, is a vast treasure-house of sacred shrines and cities.

Most of these sacred shrines and cities date from prehistoric times, and the legends associated with their origin are an imperishable tradition with the Hindus. They form the subject-matter of songs and sacred literature and they are writ large in the very stones that endure to this day after centuries of vicissitudes. It is remarkable that neither wave after wave of foreign conquest, nor the vandalism of iconoclasts, could impair the vitality of the ancient heritage of the Hindus. The arts and architecture, which enshrine the rich traditions of culture and religion in India, have survived the onslaughts of thousands of years. Western ideas have, of late, disturbed our beliefs and habits of life, but the old tradition still goes its way, free-flowing like the mighty Ganges which,

with its unruffled tide

Seems like its genius typified,—

Its strength, its grace,

Its lucid gleam, its sober pride,

Its tranquil pace.

An attempt is made in this book to cover the important cities and sacred

shrines all over India—the British Provinces and the Indian States—which, in regard to matters of culture and civilisation, has remained through the ages one and indivisible. Neither wars nor conquests, diversities of occupation or allegiance, nor all the accidents of history through vast spaces and immemorial times could obliterate this fundamental unity of India.

But this is no mere guide book for the tourist. It is literature of a novel kind, making available to the English-reading public the rich treasures of the *sthala purana*, with copious descriptions of places and temple architecture. For temple architecture in India attained the highest standard of excellence since the Buddhistic Ages, and the student of comparative architecture will find in it ample material for study and interest.

It is with this view that every effort has been made to furnish illustrations of as many temples as possible. An index of contents showing the cities described, and an index of portraits of temples for easy

reference, are also furnished for the convenience of readers.

To help the pilgrim in his progress from temple to temple, every attempt is made to give practical advice on the routes and the convenient methods of transport available. The Railway lines and the stations nearest the pilgrim-centres are duly marked for the benefit of the traveller.

It is hoped that a book of this unique character will be welcomed, not only by pilgrims and tourists, but by students and others interested in the history and achitecture of many significant places in this land of sacred shrines and cities.

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# TEMPLES IN AND AROUND MADRAS

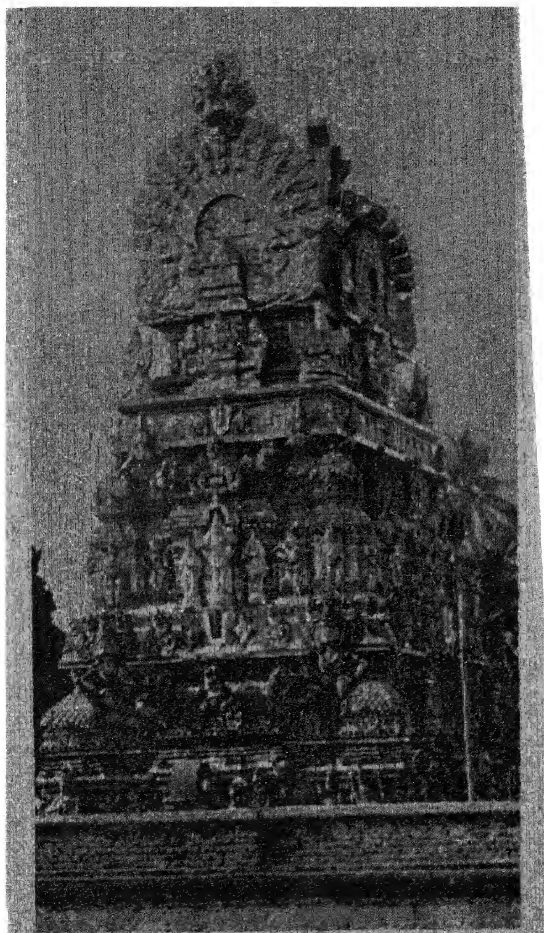
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MADRAS includes two shrines of sacred and ancient renown—Triplicane and Mylapore. These two localities figure in the East India Company's records as prosaic acquisitions—one from the Sultan of Golconda on an annual rental of Rs. 175 and the other from the Nawab of Arcot on condition of supplying him with men and money whenever required. They boast, however, of a very hoary past and have long figured in the Hindu pilgrim's itinerary.

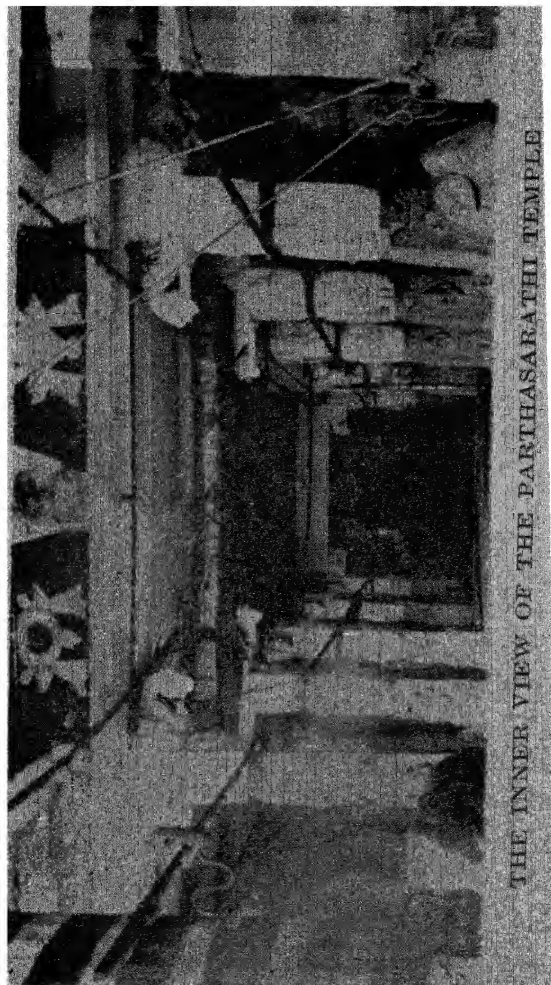
## Triplicane

### PARṠHASARATHI TEMPLE

Triplicane, like Mahabalipuram, represents the influence of the earliest wave of Vaishnavism that broke over South India and contains a temple dedicated to Krishna as Divine Charioteer or *Parthasarathi*—the only one of its kind in Southern parts. There are several beautiful images in the temple including one of Krishna,



THE PARTHASARATHI TEMPLE, TRIPPLICANE



THE INNER VIEW OF THE PARTHASARATHI TEMPLE

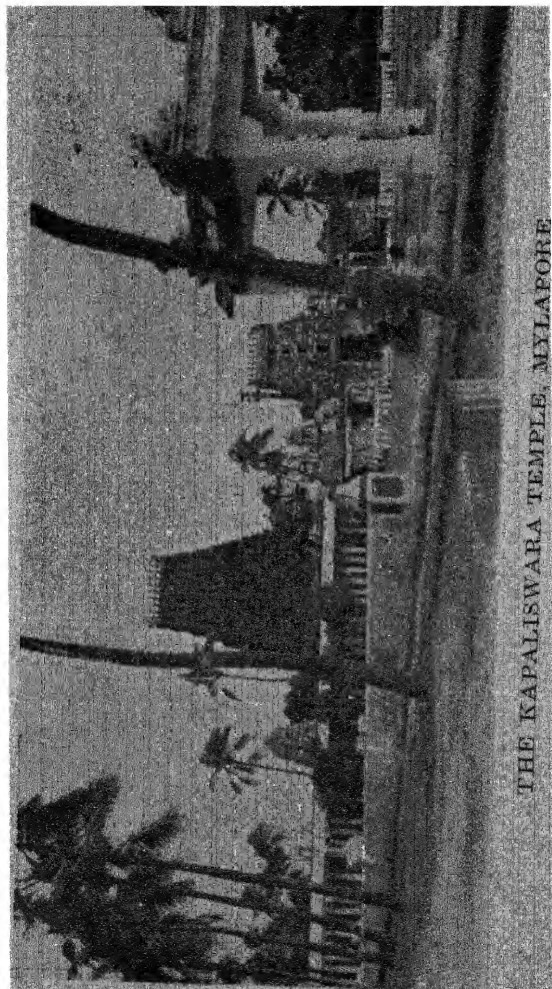
in black metal, as the charioteer bearing scars of the wounds he received from arrows in the Epic battle. There is a tank in front of the temple in which, it is said, owing to a curse from a Rishi, fish cannot live. The temple was founded by a Pallava king—a fact testified to by the Vaishnava poet, Tirumangai Alwar and corroborated by an inscription of the 8th century found in the temple. According to inscriptional evidence, the shrine was rebuilt on an extensive scale in 1564 A.D.

## Mylapore

### KAPALISWARA TEMPLE

Mylapore contains a beautiful temple and tank dedicated to Siva under the name of Kapaliswara. The name of the town has its origin in a legend according to which Goddess Parvati is said to have incarnated as a peacock (*mayura*) and worshipped Siva here in order to obtain deliverance. The legend is commemorated in a fine sculpture in the north prakara of the temple.

A number of well-known Tamil saints and poets are associated with this place. Sambandar, of whom there is a fine



THE KAPALISWARA TEMPLE, MYSORE

image in the temple, is said to have restored a cremated Chetti girl to life by singing a hymn in praise of the deity. The poetess-saint Avvayar's memory is commemorated by the peculiar representation of Ganesa in the temple, with his trunk uplifted, as he is said to have done when he raised the poetess to Heaven. A few yards to the north of the Kapaliswara temple is the shrine of Saint Tiruvalluvar, the author of the *Kural*, who spent his last days in Mylapore. The Vaishnava poet, Peyalwar, is said to have been born in a well in Mylapore. The Mylapore shrine is pre-eminently associated with the annual festival in honour of the 63 Saiva Nayanmars conducted annually in the Spring. The place was included in the town of San Thome when it rose to prominence in the 16th century.

### George Town

There are numerous other temples in the city, particularly in George Town, with traditions going back to centuries past. Flourishing in the busy part of the city, they are well endowed and supported by the

wealthy mercantile classes. Among such temples may be mentioned the Kandaswami temple dedicated to God Subramanya, the Mallekeswar Temple, the Kachaleswar Temple. Above all and being the most ancient of them is the Madras Town Temple dedicated to the twin deities, Sri Chennakesava Perumal and Mallisvaran who are the patron-deities of the city. This temple is almost coeval with the foundation of Madras. The original shrine, which stood in old Black Town, was demolished in the 18th century to make room for the north glacis of the Fort; and the present temple was built a few years after 1760 in the present George Town.

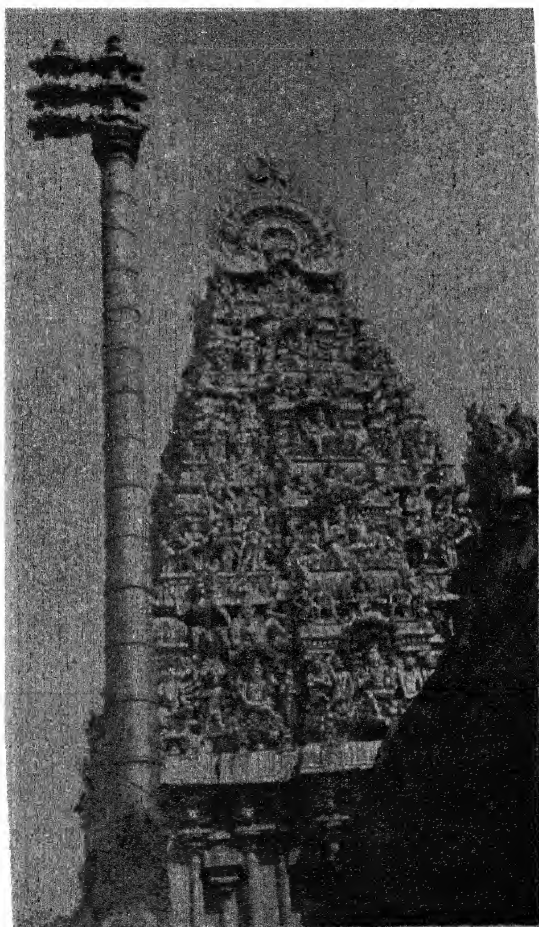
## Tiruvottiyur

### THE MIRACLE OF PATTINATTAR

Tiruvottiyur is a famous place of pilgrimage five miles to the North of Madras. The deity of the place is known as Adipuriswara and the linga in the temple is said to be in the form of an ant-hill.

The place owes its celebrity and sacredness to the miracles wrought by the well-known Tamil poet and ascetic; Pattinathu Pillayar.





TIRUVOTTYUR TEMPLE

whose samadhi still stands within the town. The place is also associated with the Tamil Nayanar Sundaramurthi, who met and fell in love with Sangili in this temple and accepted her hand in marriage.

The town and temple had great fame and importance in medieval times. Many Chola rulers visited this shrine and made large grants to it. Kings, ministers, princesses, merchants and others vied with each other in building shrines and making valuable gifts to them. The main temple abounded with a number of Mutts or charitable institutions such as Rajendra Cholan Mutt, Kulottunga Cholan Mutt and others wherein devotees were fed every day, and with a number of colleges housed in open pavilions or mantapas such as Vakkanikkum Mantapa where discourses (in Logic) were held, Vyakarnadana Vyakhyana Mantapa where grammar was presented and commented upon. Its festivals were attended by kings. The Chola king Rajadhiraja II attended in person a festival in the temple in the 9th year of his reign. His successor Kulottunga III was present at

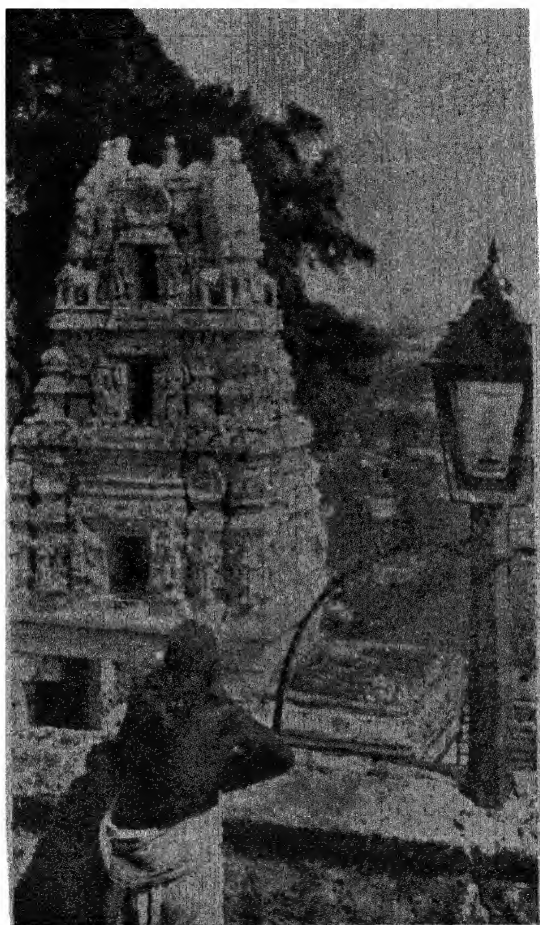
the Rajarajantirumantapam to witness the Ani festival and later held a durbar. Sankaracharya is said to have visited the temple, which is corroborated by an image of his in the temple. The temple's greatness was such that a nobleman of the locality was entrusted with the office of acting as hereditary warden to the temple.

### Tiruttani

Tiruttani is a town in the Chittoor district, situate on the M. & S. M. Railway.

It is a picturesque sacred town like many others in South India surrounded by lovely hills and valleys. It has a shrine built on a hill, dedicated to Sri Subramanya and is famous throughout South India as a place of pilgrimage and worship.

The local legend says that it was at this place that Subramanya destroyed the Asura known as Sura Padmasura and others and that the chief of the gods Indra, on whose behalf he killed the demon, pleased with him, bestowed the hand of his daughter, Devayana, on him. Subramanya thereafter



SRI SUBRAMANYA TEMPLE, TIRUTTANI

is said to have lived a life of blissful penance and meditation. Hence the name of this place Tiruttani or Blissful Repose. The path to the temple which is majestically built on the hill is by means of two flights of steps, one on the east and the other on the west of the hill.

There are a number of sacred pools or springs in and around the place in all of which the devout pilgrim bathes.

Distribution of food is considered very meritorious in this sacred shrine, and many pilgrims make it a point to feed the hungry and the destitute in fulfilment of their devotions at the shrine.

There are numerous choultries scattered all over the place—indeed one suburb, Matamgramam, derives its name from a large collection of mutts and chatrams therein.

## Kalahasti

Kalahasti is a town in the Chittoor district and a railway station on the Katpadi-Renigunta section of the M. & S. M. Railway.

Kalahasti has a temple dedicated to Siva and is famous throughout South India as a sacred city and place of pilgrimage.

The Linga of Kalahasti is one of the five supreme Lingas, famous in South India as representing severally the Five Great Elements. This Linga is said to represent Air or Vayu. The name of the Deity is said to be derived from a legend, that He was worshipped jointly by a spider, a cobra and an elephant (Sri=a spider, Kala=a serpent and Hasti=an elephant). Their marks are still visible on the Linga which is a Svayambu (natural).

The town and temple are situate in beautiful natural surroundings. The river Swarnamukhi flows on one side of the town which is on the other side bounded by hills. The temple is a huge and beautiful one, with magnificent gopuras. The temple, apart from the fame and sacredness of its Linga, is noted as the scene of the devout sacrifice and worship of the well known Tamil Saint, Kannappar. Kannappar was a hunter by birth and daily offered to Siva part of the game he killed during the day.

One day while offering his devotions to the deity, he saw water welling out of one of the eyes of the deity. Finding other means useless, the saint plucked out one of his own eyes and inserted it into the deity's. The water ceased to flow, but some time after the other eye of the deity also manifested the same condition. And Kannappar, undaunted, plucked out his remaining eye and substituted it for the deity's, rendering himself in the act totally blind. The deity, pleased with his heroic devotion, blessed him and gave him salvation.

The goddess of this temple is reputed to possess curing powers over women possessed of evil spirits.

The most important festival in this temple is that of Mahasivaratri which lasts for 10 days in February-March. The fifth day of the festival corresponds to the Sivaratri proper when the pilgrims bathe in the sacred river, pray and keep vigil all through night often fasting the entire day and night.

There is also a big festival on the third day after Sankranthi in January when

the Deity is taken in a palanquin round the Kalahasti hills—a circuit of 20 miles.

## Tirupati

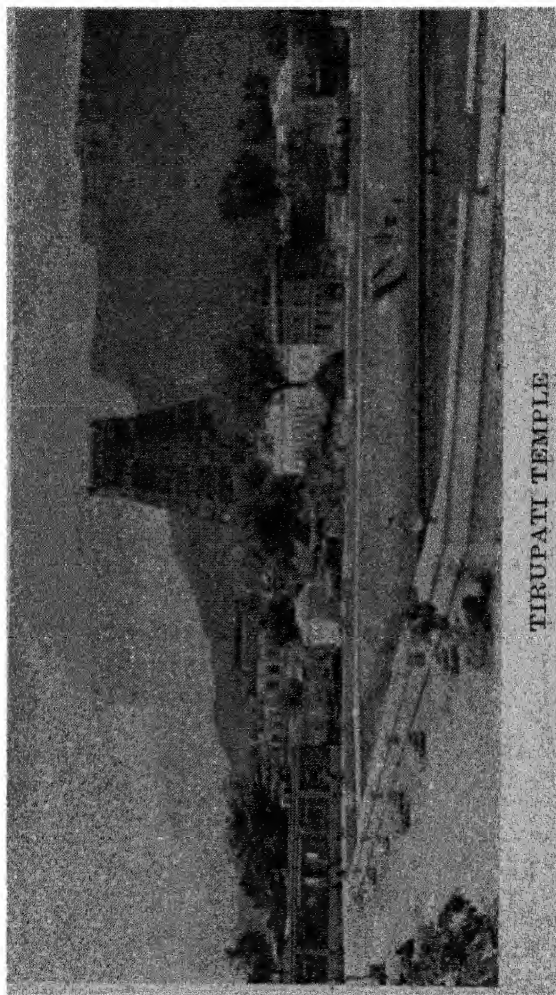
### THE GOD OF THE SEVEN HILLS

Tirupati lies in the midst of the Seshachalam hills at a distance of seven miles from Tirupati East, a railway station on the M. & S. M. Railway.

It is the most sacred Vaishnava temple-city of South India. It has also a great reputation throughout India on account of the great saving power of its Deity, cherished by North Indian pilgrims as Balajee.

The temple and town are sacred from very ancient times. According to legend, it is said to have been a very sacred place in all the four æons—as Vrishabachala in the Krita Yuga, Anjanachala in the Treta Yuga, Seshachala in the Dwapara Yuga, and Venkatachala in the present Kaliyuga. At one time there seems to have been some dispute as to the identity of this Deity. Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava Reformer of the 12th century, is said to





TIRUPATI TEMPLE

have settled the dispute and established the worship of the Lord Srinivasa.

The temple is situate on one of a group of seven hills rising to an altitude of 2,500 feet. The path lies across six hills which all afford wonderful scenery. The seven hills represent the seven heads of Adisesha; the centre of the serpent's body is Ahobala Narasimha and the tail-end is Srisaila Mallikarjuna. The temple is a beautiful one built of stone with a fine gopura and tower. Crossing the entrance gopura, one first sees the golden Dwajastambha (Flag-staff). After passing it, there is a thousand-pillared pavilion (mantapa) beyond which lies the Sanctum Sanctorum whose vimana was gilded by Tatacharya, the Rajaguru of the rulers of Vijayanagar. The pillars are all well-wrought, adorned with sculptures and add greatly to the beauty of this hill temple.

Elaborate religious service is carried on in the temple every day. There are morning darshans of God, known as Shuddin, Tomala and Archana, followed by a free Darshan; these are again repeated in the evening

ending in a free Darshan. Special services are performed on the payment of proper fees by pilgrims. There is an annual Brahmotsava festival also lasting for 10 days.

A number of temples in the neighbourhood are also held very sacred—Sri Govindarajasami's temple at Tirupati, Goddess Padmavati's temple at Tiruchanur, a village 3 miles from Tirupati.

There are a number of pools in the hills and below which are deemed sacred and which are resorted to by pilgrims—Sri Swami Pushkarani near the temple on the hill, Akasa Ganga four miles away on the hills containing a slender waterfall whose waters are daily taken to the temple for religious use, and Kapilathirtham, a sacred tank, a mile and half distant from the Tirupati town, where Siva is said to have blessed sage Kapila with a vision of Himself and his Divine Consort. In the last thirtha, ceremonies are often performed to please deceased relations, accompanied by gifts.

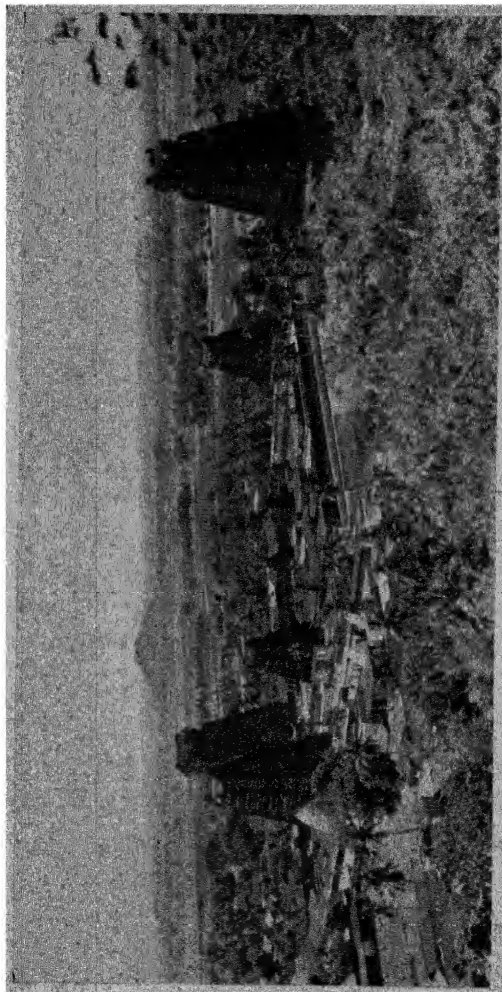
## Tirukkalikunram

### THE LEGEND OF THE KITES

Nine miles south-east of Chingleput is Tirukkalikunram, one of the most celebrated places of pilgrimage in Tamil India. The temple, which is dedicated to Siva under the name of Vedagiriswarar, is situate on the top of a hill and commands a fine view of the country around, the *Seven Pagodas* and the sea to the east being visible from the shrine on the hill.

The shrine is built of three huge blocks of stone, which form its inner walls; and on these walls are cut in relief sculptures, one of Siva and Parvati with the child Subramanya; another of Siva as Yogadakshinamoorthi with two rishis, the subject of the local legend of the kites; and a third on the southern wall representing Siva as Chandeswara and Nandikeswara.

Beneath this shrine, to the east of the hill, there is a monolithic cave, called locally *Orukalmantapa*. It consists of two



THE MOOVAR KOVIL : TIRUKKALIKUNRAM

verandahs,  $21\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad and 26 feet deep cut into the rock. The verandahs are supported by massive pillars. In the upper verandah is a cell in the centre of which is a huge Linga. Tall, beautiful figures of Brahma and Vishnu, cut out of the rock, flank the cell. The cell has the appearance of a sanctuary and was originally a place of worship. It is probable that this cave-shrine, with its Linga, represents the original Mulasthana Temple sung of by Tamil poets and saints. This cave was excavated by the Pallava king, Vatapi-konda Narasimhapottaraya, in whose time the monolithic Rathas at Mahabalipuram were commenced. It was this temple that was the cause of the hill's sacredness and fame, and represents the original deity who cursed the two rishis to become vultures.

There is a beautiful tank at the foot of the hill known as Sankhathirtham. Occasionally *valampuri* sankhas or right-turned chanks, so highly valued by the Hindus, are found in this tank. The temple at the foot of the hill is the Moovar Kovil (the shrine of the three saints :

Appar, Sundaramurthi and Gnanasambandar, who did not ascend the hill for fear that their feet would pollute its sanctity). It has two courts and a tank within the Nandi Tirtha. It has been rendered very sacred by Manikkavachaka's songs, entitled the 'Lyric of the Eagle Mount'. According to the local *Sthalapurana*, Suraguru, a Chola ruler of Mahabalipuram, built it and is represented by carvings in it.

The temple has been patronised by the successive dynasties of South India. The Chola king, Rajakesarivarman Aditya I, renewed a grant made to the temple. There is a copper-plate sasana in the Madras Museum, which says that Vijayaranga Chokkanatha Nayaka constructed a mutt in this place and made provision for its upkeep in A.D. 1717.

The classical name of the place is Vedagiri, which means that the hills represent the four Vedas. The Vedas were originally intact and one; but many divisions were made in them by rishis. The Vedas, desiring to be one and undivided, together with their Angas:

(sciences), approached Siva and prayed to be placed together and high in the reverence of men. Lord Siva directed the Vedas to take the form of the mountains at Tirukkalikunram, promising that He Himself would dwell on their tops as a Linga for ever receiving their worship and that He would shine from there as a beacon-light to the dark and maya-enclosed world. Hence the hill came to be known as Vedagiri.

The well-known feature of this hill-temple—the diurnal appearance of a pair of kites—which has given it age-long fame and celebrity, is the subject of another subsidiary legend. Once upon a time there lived two saintly brothers, the elder of whom was devoted to Siva and the younger to Sakti. On one occasion they fell into a quarrel as to the relative superiority of the deities they respectively cherished and worshipped. Siva Himself appeared and told them that He and Sakti were equal and co-ordinate and that they need not quarrel over a doubt which never could arise. But the brothers continued their quarrel. Siva, becoming angry, cursed



them to become vultures ; but, on the rishis falling at His feet in true repentance, Siva promised them liberation at the end of Kaliyuga. The two rishis were accordingly born as vultures, named Adi and Sambu, and daily worshipped Siva. Hence it is that two birds—the metamorphosed and erring rishis—daily visit the sacred hill to adore Siva and are fed. The phenomenon, whatever be the nature of the legend behind it, is a most striking daily event and serves greatly to enhance the reverence to, and worship of, the local deity by the Hindus. The phenomenon is several centuries old and has been testified to by foreigners as well. Several Dutchmen visited the place in the 17th century ; and their signatures can be seen engraved on the pillars of the Mantapa on the hill.

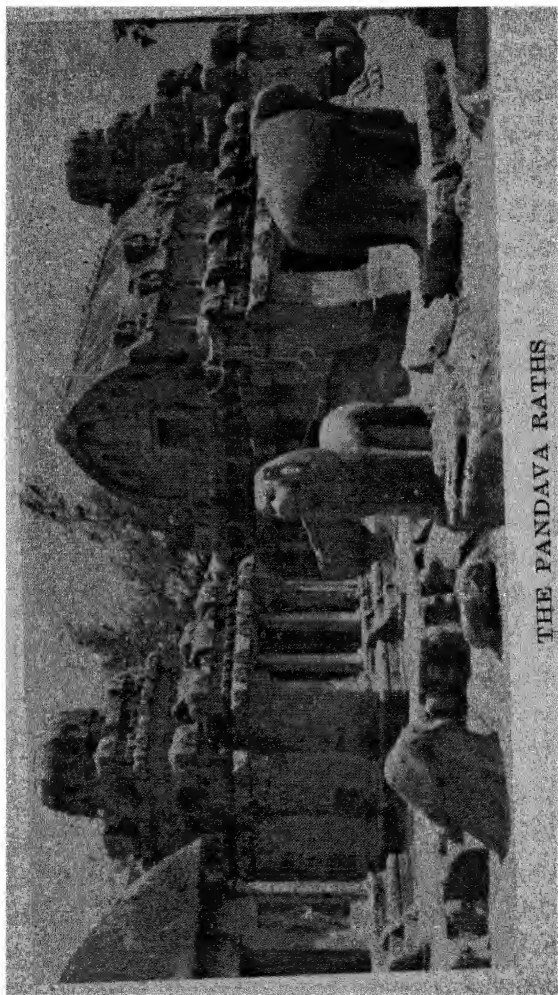
### **Mahabalipuram**

The earliest examples of Dravidian architecture which still exist, date from the sixth century A.D. and belong to the Pallava period. The reason for this probably is that the transition from

building in perishable material to building in stone in South India took place nearly a thousand years later than in North India. In North India, the innovation took place earlier in the time of Asoka, whereas in the South it started during the rule of the Pallava kings.

The early Pallava kings were Jainas. The first Pallava king to become a Hindu was Mahendra Varman (cir 600-625 B.C.). According to his inscriptions found at Kanchi (Conjeeveram) and Mandagappattu (South Arcot district), Mahendra Varman was converted to Hinduism by the Saint Apparswami. It was Mahendra Varman who introduced in South India the cave-style of temple architecture which was borrowed from the lower valleys of the Godavari and the Krishna where had been excavated rock-shrines.

Among the many temples built by this king, an interesting group is to be found at Mahavellipuram, about 46 miles by road from Madras *via* Chingleput. The name Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram is believed to be a corruption of Mahamallapuram (from Mahamalla the great warrior, a



THE PANDAVA RATHS

*biruda* of Narasimhavarman Pallava, the son of Mahendra). Here lies a group of boulder formations on the sea-shore, out of which have been carved numerous cave temples, sculptures and monolithic temples. Curiously enough, these monolithic temples or *raths* are known as the "Seven Pagodas", though only five exist.

The *raths* are named after the five Pandava brothers of Mahabharata fame and their wife Draupadi. Though they are similar in style, they vary in form. In the "Arjuna" *rath*, we find the earliest prototype of the later Dravidian temple in its simplest form. In the "Sahadeva" and "Bhima" *raths*, traces of Buddhist influence are still evident; the uppermost storey of the "Sahadeva" *rath* is shaped like an apsidal Chaitya-hall of a Buddhist Vihara and the "Bhima" *rath* has an elongated barrel-vault roof of the type with which the bas-reliefs at Bharut, Sanchi and Amaravati have made us familiar. The last storey of the "Dharmaraja" *rath* has a fine hexagonal dome. The "Draupadi" *rath* is rather unique in its way; it is a small square

temple, with a curvilinear roof like that of the present-day thatched huts in Bengal. This form was most probably conceived from prototypes in bamboo construction,

These monolithic constructions contain Pallava sculptures of a very fine type. The representation of the deities is more subdued and delicate than those found elsewhere. The figures are most graceful and mobile. The most noteworthy features of this group as a whole are the capitals without abacus; the brackets which are either plain or fluted horizontally; roll cornices with chaitya-window *niches* enclosing heads or figures without a crowning *kirti-mukha*; and *makara torana* lintels. Around the *raths* are grouped some fine monolithic sculptures of animals—lion, bull and elephant.

A little further away on a higher group of the boulder formations are to be found the cave-temples. Of these the most noteworthy are the ones known as "Trimurti", "Varaha", "Durga", and the "Pancha Pandava". The sculptures in the caves compare favourably with those of Ellora and Elephanta. The "Varaha" and "Durga" caves both have a verandah with slender

octagonal pillars each supported by a sitting lion.

This type of pillar is very characteristic of Pallava architecture; it developed later into the *Yali* pillars of mediæval Dravidian art. In the "Varaha" cave, we see a series of magnificent reliefs representing the Varaha-Avatara, Vaman-Avatara, Surya, Durga, Gaja-Lakshmi and two groups which represent the kings Simhavishnu and Mahendra Varman with their queens.

The "Durga" cave contains the well-known Vishnu-Anantasayin and Durga-Mahishmardini sculptures, while the "Pancha Pandava" contains representations of Krishna-Dudhadhari and Govardhanadhara. The view from these cave temples is exquisite. Yonder lies the sea breaking upon the rocks and boulders and the eye passes over the green fields of paddy with the placid waters of the Canal flowing by.

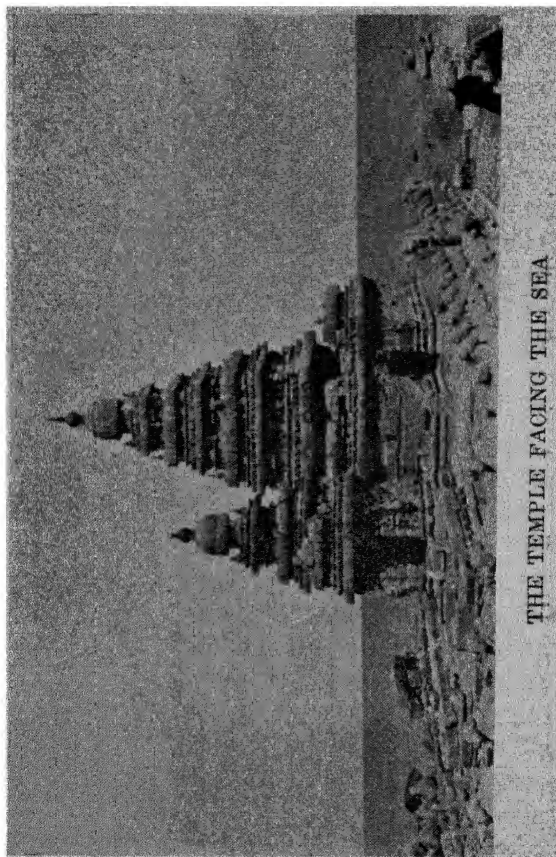
A little further down the cave temples is the open-air sculpture known as "Arjuna's Penance". Here a great rock wall with a fissure in its middle is ornamented on both sides with sculptured figures of deities,

human beings, Nagas and a variety of animals. All these figures are carved either facing or approaching the fissure and generally with hands folded in adoration. Immediately on the left of the fissure there is a representation of a simple Dravidian temple, very similar to the "Arjuna" *rath* and it contains a four-armed deity, probably Siva; the figure of an emaciated *yogi* is bowed before the shrine. The fissure is sculptured with Nagas—beings associated with water. Above the fissure and on either side of it are flying figures of gods; below are some sculptures of animals of which the giant elephants are the most impressive. Near-by, we see a monkey family depicted—an exquisite piece of animal sculpture. This open-air sculpture has a story to tell. The older theory is that it represents the penance of Arjuna during his exile; by this penance Arjuna pleased Siva who gave Arjuna his famous weapon of war "pasupata" as a gift. A later theory supported by Dr. Coomarswamy has it that it depicts the "Descent of the Ganges". No local tradition, however, exists which can serve as a real clue to its origin.

In front of this open-air sculpture is a more modern temple which is used for worship. This temple is typical of the later Dravidian type.

About half a mile further down on the sea-shore stands the Shore Temple. It belongs to a period when Dravidian architecture was at its height, in its decorative beauty and intrinsic quality. Apart from its fine and delicate carvings which give this temple a jewel-like grace, its surroundings lend it an indescribable charm and grandeur. Once seen it is an unforgettable sight! He who chose this site must have been a man of rare artistic discernment. The temple stands against a background of the foam-wreathed, deep blue waters of the sea; the waves kiss the feet of this solitary ruin in the midst of immensity; the waves splash the broken column of what was once a light-house. Standing at a solitary niche-like window of the temple itself, one may gaze through the mind's eye upon a far-away scene and piece together the fragments of it which still remain—the broken column and the





THE TEMPLE FACING THE SEA

sea-blanchèd boulders into a composite picture of the past.

Taken as a whole, the group of monuments at Mahavellipuram equals in variety, interest and beauty any other group of ancient relics in India. It is curious that Mahavellipuram is not better known to people in different parts of India. The chief monuments fall into three classes: monolithic rock-cut shrines; caves excavated on hill-sides, and structural buildings and temples; besides sculptural bas-reliefs.

Mamallapuram served as the part of the Pallava capital, Conjeevaram. It is the reputed birth-place of an early Vaishnava saint, Bhutattalvar. It is praised by Tirumangai Alwar, as Kadalmallai (Mallai by the sea), in his hymns; and it was evidently a reputed Vaishnava shrine even in the days anterior to the Pallava epoch.

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# CONJEEVARAM

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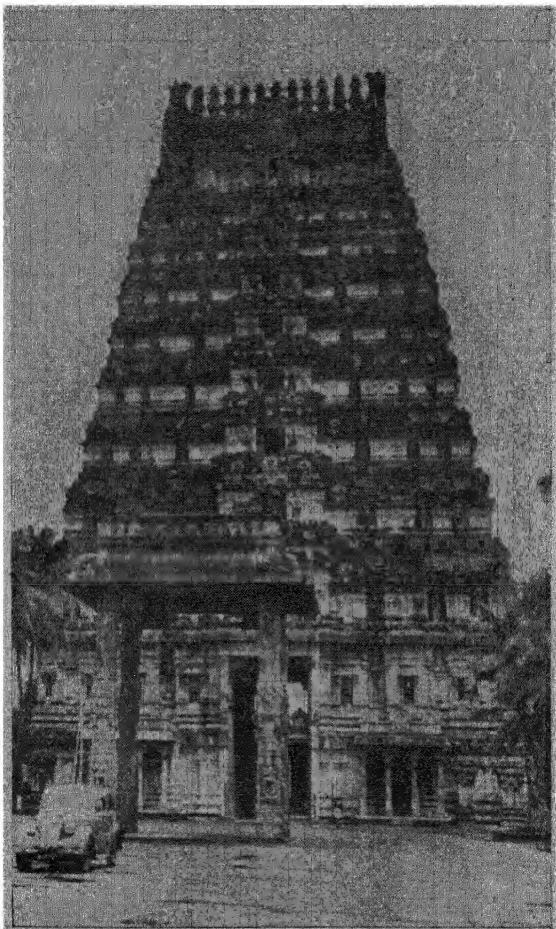
CONJEEVARAM (Chingleput District, Madras Presidency, situated 45 miles west-south-west of Madras on the Chingleput-Arkonam line, S. I. R.) is one of the most ancient and celebrated towns of South India. It is also one of the seven sacred places of India, the others being Ayodhya, Muttra, Maya (Haridwar), Kasi (Benares), Avantika, and Dwaraka. It consists of two divisions: Saiva or Big Conjeevaram, and Vishnu or Little Conjeevaram. Tradition tells us of the existence in former days of a third town, the Jina Kanchi peopled by the Jainas who still live in some number in the neighbouring village of Tirupparuttikunnam. A brief history of the town will throw light on its religious and historic importance and how it came to be studded with numerous temples dedicated to Siva and Vishnu, and to acquire the character of an All-India sacred city.

## THE CAPITAL OF THE PALLAVAS

It was originally the capital of the Pallavas who ruled over South India between 4th and 8th centuries A.D. Even earlier it had come to be a fertile cultivated district, situated at the northern fringe of the Chola kingdom, known as Tondaimandalam. The Pallavas were great patrons of learning and art, and upholders of Hindu religion. Under their rule, the city became a literary and religious centre. Sanskrit scholars like Dignaga the Buddhist logician and others lived in the city. It is to this period that those glowing descriptions of the city in the ancient classical works like Tamil 'Manimekalai' refer. We read that the city was strongly fortified, was resplendent with towering palaces, was surrounded by a moat and had big streets fit for cars to run in. Another poet (Appar) sings of it as a city "of boundless learning". Hiuen Tsiang, who visited it in the 7th century, says that the city was 6 miles in circumference and that its people were superior in bravery and piety as well in their love of justice and veneration for learning

to many others whom he met with in his travels. The Kailasanathar temple and Vaikuntaperumal temple date back to the age of the Pallavas and are full of interest to the student of South Indian antiquities and architecture. The town passed into the hands of the Cholas in the 11th century A.D., and Conjeevaram became the capital of the province of Tondaimandalam and continued in their hands till their power decayed in the 13th century. When the Vijayanagar kings spread their dominion into the Tamil country they conquered the town. After their decline, it passed into Mussulman and Maratha hands, remaining with the former till 1752, when Clive took it from them in the wars with the French.

Beginning with Saiva temples, the most important one is the Kamakshi Amman temple. Here the goddess is worshipped in the form of an Yantra. Unlike in other temples, the Chakra (the sacred mantra-bearing disc) here is placed not below, but in front of, the idol. An image of Sankaracharya is worshipped in



SRI EKAMBARANATHA TEMPLE

the temple. The legend associated with it is as follows:—Kamakshi Amman, in the form of Kali, was said to be doing havoc in the city at nights. Sankara came and appeased it and extracted a promise from her that she would not stir out of the temple without his permission. Hence came the image of the great Vedantist in the temple, before which they halt the deity—whenever it is taken out in procession to the city—as a token of applying for permission in pursuance of the promise.

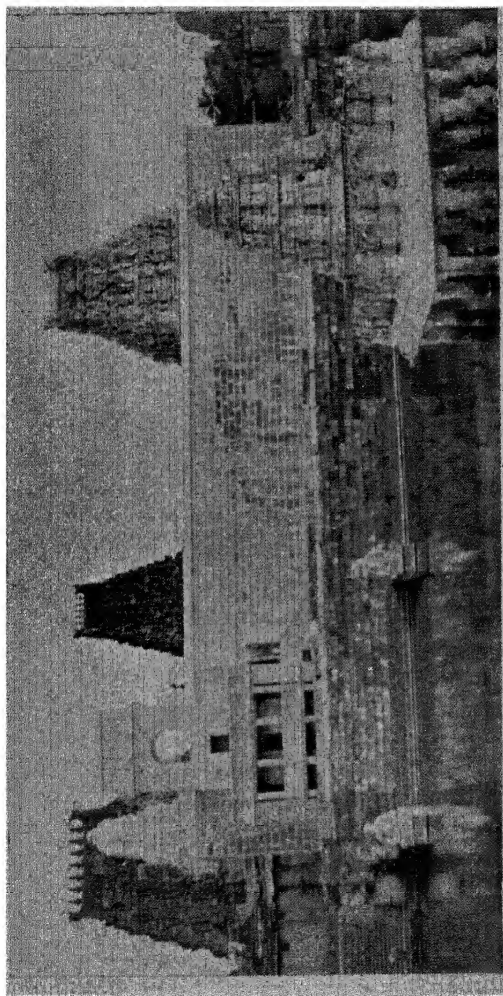
Sri Ekambaranatha temple is another important shrine of Siva. The shrine has a mango tree, to which great sanctity is attached, under which Siva is said to have appeared to Goddess Parvati when she prayed to him on the Vegavati river (Kambai which flows west of Conjeevaram). It served as a fortress in the 18th century wars.

An ancient and equally important Saiva shrine is the Sri Kailasanathar temple. It was built by the Pallava king Rajasimha, about A.D. 667 and was called



KAMAKSHI AMMAN



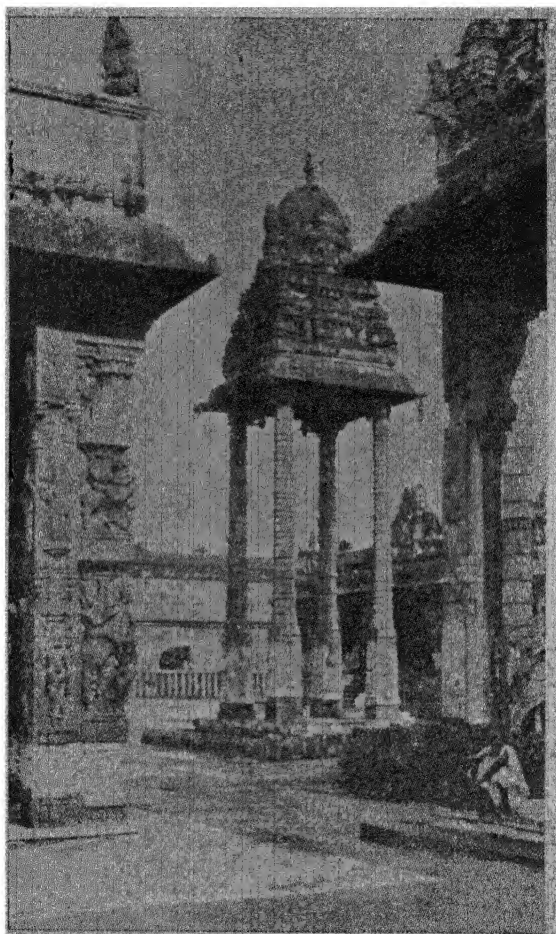


KAMAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE

originally after his own name as Rajasimha-Pallavesvara. The temple is famous for the beauty of its sculptures. It is in characteristic Pallava style with the vimana over the garbagriha rising high and dominating the entire temple as in the Tanjore Brihadisvara shrine.

The other temples in Saiva Conjeevaram are Kachchapeswara temple where Siva appears as being worshipped by Vishnu in the form of Kurma Merrali in the weaver's quarters, Onakantesvar, Anegathangavadam, Airavatesvara, Tirukaraikadu and Chitragupta. The last is the only one of its kind known to South India dedicated to the lieutenant of the God of Death, who records the good and bad acts of men. There is a famous temple dedicated to Subrahmanya, known as Kumara Kottam.

Of the Vishnu temples, the most important one is that of Varadaraja with the sanctum built on a hillock. It was patronised by Vijayanagar kings well known for their Vaishnava leanings entrusted to their gurus, the Lakshmi Kumara Tatacharyas. Achyuta Raya visited the



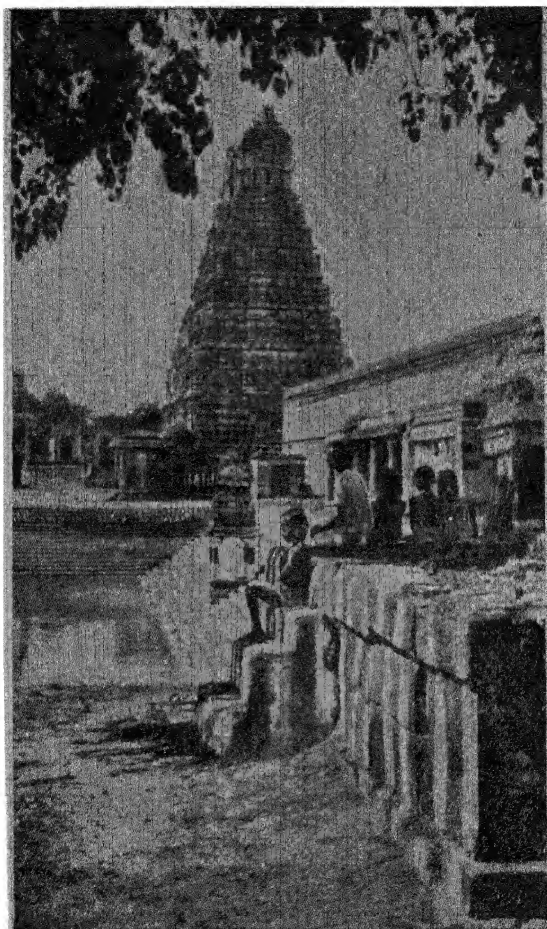
DEVARAJASWAMI TEMPLE

temple and gave the deity numerous clothes, ornaments and jewels set with stones and gifted the revenues of 17 villages to the temple.

An equally important Vaishnava temple is the Vaikuntaperumal temple, built by the great Pallava king, Paramesvaravarman II. and originally named after him as Paramesvara-vinnagaram. It contains various fine sculptures of Vishnu and is also famous for a series of sculptures dealing with a famous episode of Pallava history.

The other important Vishnu shrines are those of Pandavadudar, Vilakkoliperumal, Ashtabhujā and Ulagalanda-perumal. These are on the western part of the town. Some of these were built by the great Vijayanagar Emperor, Krishna Deva Raya, and many of the smaller shrines and rest-houses owe their origin to the piety of the members of the same dynasty.

There is a Jain sacred place about 2 miles to the south of Conjeevaram known as Tirupparuttikunram, with florid



DEVARAJASWAMI TEMPLE—*Another View*

architecture, notable sculptures and paintings.

We have already referred to the connection of Sankaracharya with the Kamakshi Amman temple. Here at the close, we may refer to the more important part Conjeevaram played in the propagation of the Vedantic Philosophy which Sankara set himself to preach. He established here an Episcopal seat (Acharya-pita)—one of the four he established all over India—and it was known as Kamakshipita and it continued in Conjeevaram till 1688 A.D. (originally at Vishnu Kanchi, then removed to Siva Kanchi). Pratapa Simha, the Raja of Tanjore, invited the then Swami to Tanjore where a temple was constructed to Goddess Kamakshi (which now exists)., As Kumbakonam appeared better suited, king Sarfoji of Tanjore constructed the present mutt there in A.D. 1743.

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# TIRUVANNAMALAI

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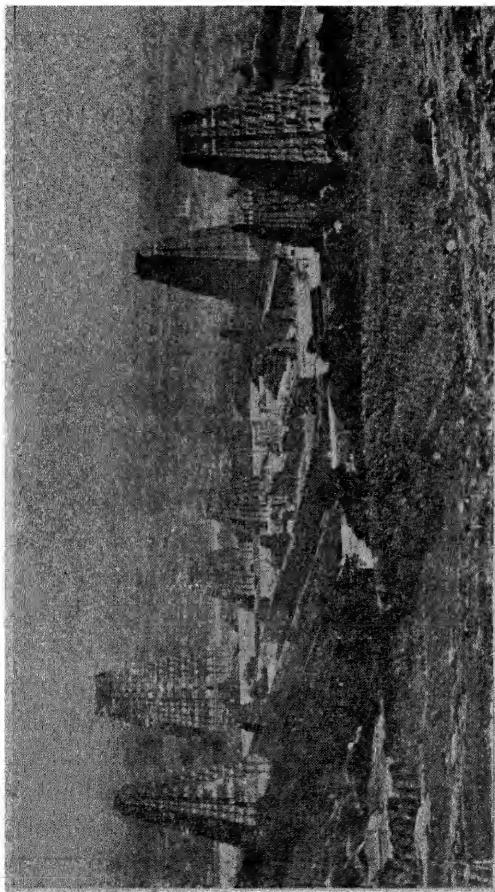
**T**IRUVANNAMALAI (Railway Station on the Villupuram-Katpadi line, S. I. R.) is a noted Saiva shrine and pilgrim centre. It attracts a large number of pilgrims all the year round ; and its most famous celebration is the yearly Karttikai festival.

The hill rises 3,000 feet above the sea-level. The temple, which lies at the foot of the hill, is dedicated to Siva and is one of the biggest in South India. Many of the buildings in the present temple were built by the Hoysala, Vijayanagara and Nayak rulers. The temple tower, consisting of 11 storeys, was begun by Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar early in the 16th century, and completed by Sevappa Naik of Tanjore. Krishna Deva Raya built, besides the gopura, the thousand-pillared Mantapa and dug a tank near it. The hill and the spot have, however, been sacred from very ancient times, as may be seen from the poems in Thevaram hymns and the local

inscriptions of Pallava, Chola and succeeding sovereigns. Vamadeva, the protege of Sambunaraya Rajanarayana (14th century) wrote a work relating to the repairs already done in this temple.

South Indian religious tradition loves to cherish five temples as enshrining five different types of Linga (or Siva) representing each one of the five elements—earth, air, fire, water and sky. The Linga of the Tiruvannamalai temple is said to be the one deifying fire or Jyotir Linga. The Puranic legend associated with it is as follows:—In days of yore, a contest arose between Brahma and Vishnu as to their relative superiority. When they were thus disputing, there suddenly arose or burst into view, a huge column of flame which was no other than Siva Himself. The column of flame extended to limitless heights above and to unfathomable depths below. Siva challenged the two gods to find out the limits of His form, saying that He who succeeded first would really be the superior one. Brahma took the form of a swan and flew upwards to discover the top of the





VIEW OF THE TEMPLE FROM THE HILL—TIRUVANNAMALAI

column of light, while Vishnu became a Boar (Varaha) and tore into the earth with his tusk and journeyed underneath to find the base thereof. Both of them could not see the end of their labours and thus indirectly testified to their own comparative littleness and the greatness of Siva.

The Tamil poet Arunagirinatha, author of the devotional songs, known as the Tiruppugal, lived here. There is a representation of him and his patron-deity, Subramanya, beautifully sculptured on the east of the hill. According to Hindu tradition, the hill of the Holy Beacon—Arunachala—is the very symbol of spiritual knowledge and residence therein, or within a short radius thereof, is enough to confer enlightenment. Several Hindu seers are said to have attained perfection here. This popular tradition has gained great strength from the residence on the hill of a silent seer—known as Ramana Maharshi—who has attained fame throughout India and even outside it. He dwells in an ashram (hermitage) half way up the hill side and, though he speaks

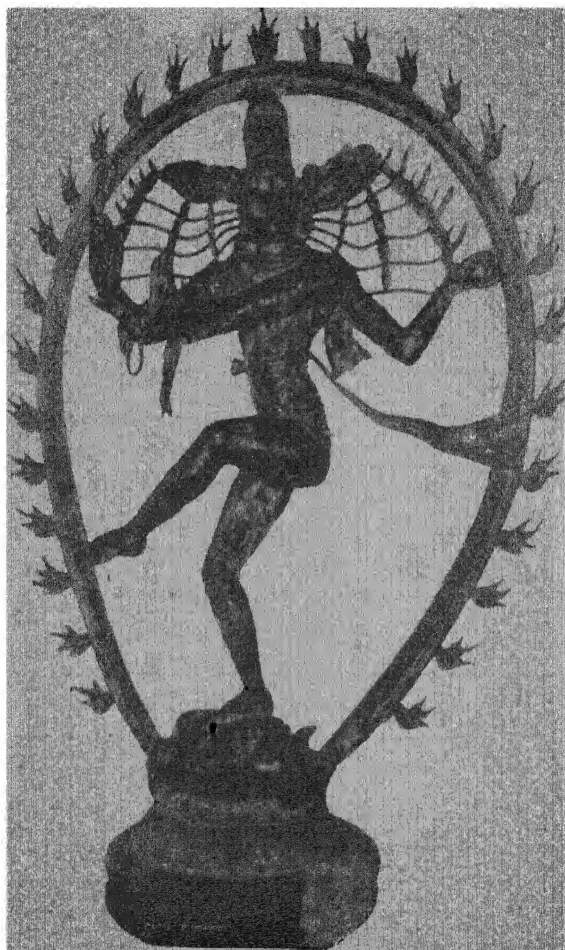
rarely, has exerted great spiritual power on those who come in search of him. This is how a Western writer describes his hermitage: "The cloistered dominion of the Maharshi is hemmed in at the front by closely growing trees and a thickly clustered garden. It is screened at the back by hedgerows of shrub and cactus, while away to the west stretches the scrub jungle . . . . . It is most picturesquely placed on a lower spur of the hill. Secluded and apart it seems a fitting spot for those who wish to pursue profound themes of meditation." (Paul Brunton's "A Secret Search in India", p. 138.) The same writer thus describes the magnetic influence of the Maharshi: "There is something in this man which holds my attention as steel filings are held by a magnet. I cannot turn my gaze away from him . . . . . I know that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, that a great peace is penetrating the innermost reaches of my being and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest."

# CHIDAMBARAM

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## THE TEMPLE OF THE DANCING SIVA

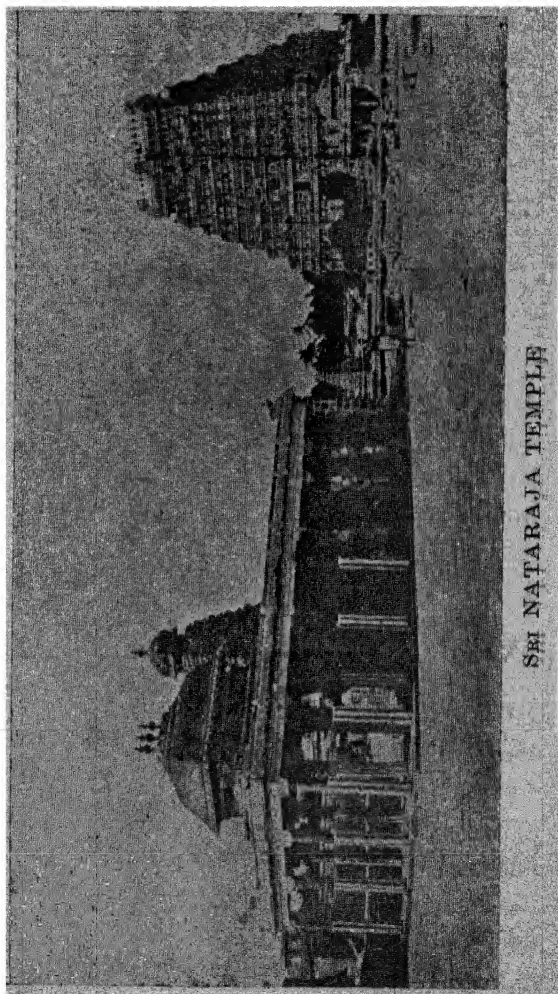
**C**HIDAMBARAM (South Arcot District, a Railway Station on the main line from Madras, S. I. Railway) contains the most historic, the most sacred and celebrated of Saiva shrines in South India. Built in magnificent proportions in the midst of a well-laid out town, midway between the Vellar river on the north and the Coleroon on the south, the sea on the east and the Viranam lake on the west, the Shrine has, from very ancient times, been the chief centre and focal point of Tamil piety and adoration and the chosen home of saints and bards. It has been lavishly endowed and patronised by successive rulers of the land, the Pallavas, the great Cholas, the Pandyas and the Nayaks, whose piety and munificence are to be seen in the numerous mantapas and sculptures that fill the temple. Chidambaram has been looked upon as, and is, the Temple (Koyil) of Southern India.



NATARAJA THE DANCING LORD

The presiding Deity of the Temple is *Nataraja* (the *Dancing Lord*). The meaning and mystical significance of the Divine Dance, as representing the cosmic process of destruction and creation, is well known and is the theme of many erudite poems and beautiful sculptures. The idol of Nataraja, which is worshipped in the temple, is enshrined in the Holy Sanctum known as the Chit Sabha. But it is not all. Behind the idol of Nataraja is a veil or curtain which is removed on specified occasions of worship and the Holy of Holies is revealed as Mere Space (Akash = Ether), out of which the great and Blissful Dancing Siva is said to have emerged. There is a chakra or mystical disc on the wall to the rear of this idol. It is this Holy of Holies representing Akash or Ether that is said to constitute the Chidambara Rahasya.

The temple at Chidambaram is one of the oldest in South India and portions of it are fine specimens of Dravidian art. There are five courts or sabhas in the temple. The Chit Sabha or the Hall within the temple is the one where the Isvara is



SRI NATARAJA TEMPLE

said to have danced while blessing the two saints—Patanjali and Vyaghrapada. The five steps leading to the golden pillared and canopied hall (Kanakan Sabha) are plated with silver and are said to signify the five letters of the Panchakshara Mantra. The Kanaka Sabha is in the centre of the innermost court in the same position in which the heart is located in the human body. The second Sabha has a shrine of Siva and other deities. The third is the famous Raja Sabha (or Durbar) contained in the lofty and well proportioned Thousand-Pillared Hall, 350 feet by 260 feet, from which a good view of the inner shrines can be obtained. The Nritta Sabha has fine sculptures at its base and shows the Oordha Tandava dance of the Lord. Fergusson writes thus of this Sabha: "The oldest thing now existing here is a little shrine in the inmost enclosure. A porch of 56 pillars, about 8 feet high, and most delicately carved, resting on a stylobate, ornamented with dancing figures, more graceful and elegantly executed than any others of their class, so far as I know,



in South India. At the sides are the wheels and horses, the whole being intended to represent a chariot." The fifth Sabha is the Deva Sabha situated in the great and majestic corridors surrounding the innermost court-yard. Apart from the Sabhas, there are beautiful little shrines inside the temple, two of which may be mentioned. The shrine of Subramanya, called Pandyanar Subramaniam, probably after a Pandyan king who built it, is a good one and abounds in beautiful carvings. On the south-west in the inmost prakara is the historic Govindaraja Perumal shrine—a shrine to Vishnu—which has seen many vicissitudes, since the Pallava days. During the days of the Cholas onwards, its image was removed and thrown out. Later it was restored and the shrine was re-consecrated by Achyutha Raya of Vijayanagar in the first half of the 16th century.

The four great gopuras (towers) at the cardinal entrance to the temple are all very imposing and grand. The southern one was constructed by a Pandya prince, and that on the north by Krishna Deva Raya.

## CHIDAM.

of Vijayanagar in commemoration of his victory over the kings of Orissa. The towers on the east and south contain interesting and fine sculptures illustrating the 108 kinds or Postures of the Hindu classical art of Dance according to the well-known Bharata Natya Sastra. Numerous fine and unusual sculptures are also to be found in the temple—one of Siva as blessing Chandesa who stands holding an axe between his hands; another of Siva as a warrior (Tripurantaka) featuring the legend which pictures Siva as emerging in battle dress with the Earth for Chariot, the Sun and the Moon for its wheels, the Vedas for horses and the Upanishads for reins, the Ocean for his Quiver, Mount Meru for bow and Vishnu as the arrow; figures of the Surya with three faces, of the guardian deities or the quarters and also bronze images of Patanjali and Vyaghrapada. There is a beautiful tank to the north of the enclosure known as Vikrama Solan Maligai and to the west of the 1000-pillared mantapam, called the Sivaganga tank 175 feet by

100 feet, with an attractive colonnade, around it.

Chidambaram has played a great part in the lives of several leading Tamil saints, bards and philosophers. They all loved to live or end their days under the shadow of the Golden Shrine and to seek inspiration for their lives and work from its Transcendent Deity. One of the earliest is, perhaps, the potter saint by name Tirunilakanta Nayanar. He was a native of Chidambaram. He and his wife were devotees of Nataraja and daily worshipped Him in the temple. The couple, however, on account of some unfounded jealousy on the part of the wife, lived in utter isolation till old age came on them and their life became almost a void. Nataraja finally appeared before them, removed their misunderstanding and, asking them to bathe in a local tank, restored to them their youth. The tank in consequence was called Ilamainyakkinar Tank which, together with its adjacent shrine, still exists, to the west of the Nataraja temple. The celebrated Tamil poet, Manikkavachagar, author of the

“Tiruvachakam”, is said to have defeated the Buddhist scholars in a religious controversy in this place, when they came here with the avowed object of disputing the sanctity of the shrine and overthrowing the worship of the deity. The story of Nanda, the Pariah saint, well known to Tamilians, centred round this shrine and its deity, and his image can be seen in a corner near the Nritta Sabha. He was born among the untouchables in a village in the neighbouring district of Tanjore. Filled with devotion to Nataraja, but bound down by caste rules and religion, he at first contented himself with worshipping at wayside shrines. Finally, obtaining the permission of his master, which was long denied, he proceeded to Chidambaram. Legend loves to narrate that his visit was revealed to the priests of the temple in a nocturnal vision and that they went forth in sacred array to receive him and that while they purified him for his reception into the Holy of holies, he attained his beatitude.

King Anapaya Chola, identified with Kulottunga II, was one of the most saintly and cultured of Chola kings. He had for his minister one Arun-Moli Thevar of Kunrattur (Saidapet Taluk, Chingleput District), who was popularly known as Sekkilar, the name of the sub-division of the Vellala caste to which he belonged. He, though of exalted worldly rank, was also a great devotee of Siva, a scholar and writer of verse and often used to narrate to the king the deeds and piety of the great worshippers of Siva in the past, as told by Nambiandar Nambi and Sundarar. The king, pleased therewith, directed Sekkilar to compose a more extensive and poetic work on the lives of the Saivite saints. And so the poet-minister left Tiruvarur, the then capital of the king, for Chidambaram and dwelling in the thousand-pillared hall and seeking the guidance and inspiration of Nataraja, composed in one year, the "Periya Puranam", which was published in open assembly in the temple by king Anapaya-chola himself, who journeyed there to receive it and which has ever since remained.

a standard work in Tamil literature. Sekkilar spent his remaining days at Chidambaram, serving and adoring the deity of his heart. A small shrine to his honour still stands on the northern bank of a tank in Chidambaram, which goes by the name of Jnanavapi. The discovery of the collection of Tamil devotional songs of Sambandar and others, which goes by the name of Tevaram, is also connected with the deity at Chidambaram. They were once lost, and tradition says that they were recovered from a room in the north-west corner of the second prakara of the Chidambaram temple.

This account may be closed with a brief reference to a Brahmin saint and poet, Chidambaram-born, whose works constitute some of the most celebrated products of the Tamil tongue. Under the influence of the life and teachings of Meykanda Devar, the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta philosopher, an apostolic seat grew up in Chidambaram. The fourth in apostolic succession to Meykanda Devar was a Brahmin by name Umapathi Sivachariar. He was born in one of the priestly

families attached to the Chidambaram temple and lived an affluent life going about in palanquin and followed by servants. The chance utterance of an ascetic "converted" him; he abjured all his wealth and position and became an ascetic. His fellow-priests persecuted him and drove him from his place and refused him right to worship at the shrine. He, however, undaunted, lived his life of true religion, teaching to all without distinction of caste the principles of Saiva faith and practice. He composed a number of works—for he was a gifted poet—like the "Koyil Puranam" (story of the Chidambaram temple) and others; but the greatest work on which his fame rests is a poem of hundred stanzas entitled "The Fruit of Divine Love" (Tiruvarutpayan).

Equally hoary is the tradition connecting the Vaishnava Alvars (Kulasekhara and Tirumangai) and the great Sri Ramanuja with the Vaishnava shrine in the temple. The Chidambaram shrine stands pre-eminent in its value as housing the twin deities from the hoariest times.

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# KUMBAKONAM

## AND ITS NEIGHBOURING SHRINES

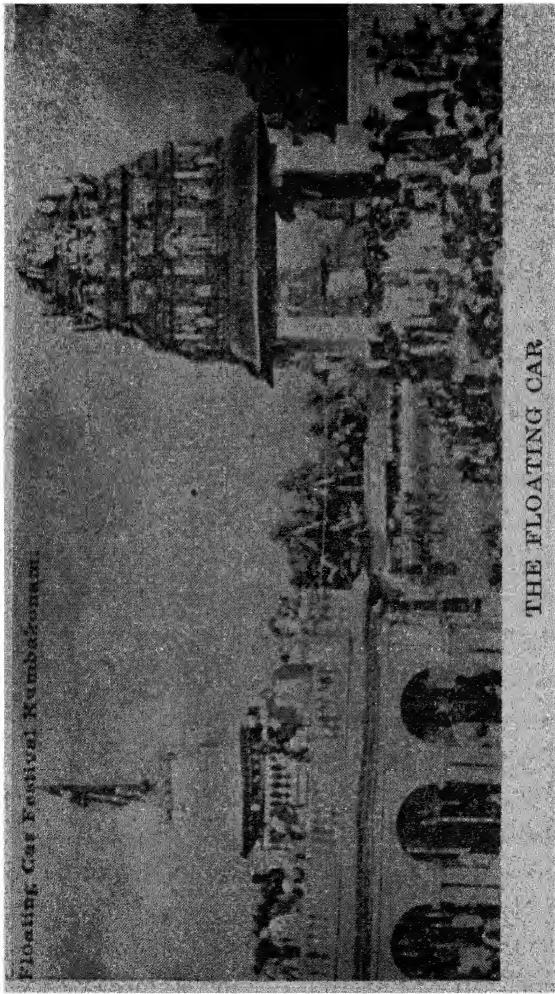
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**K**UMBAKONAM (Tanjore District Station on the main line of the S. I. R.) is one of the most ancient holy towns of South India. There are a number of holy places in its neighbourhood within a radius of 10 miles, which are all connected with it by religious tradition and which are also sacred places of pilgrimage. Kumbakonam was one of the royal capitals under the Cholas, as may be seen from the ruins in a close-by village named Solamaligai.

Kumbakonam and its temples derive their importance and sacredness principally from the Mahamakham festival, a description of which with the legend underlying it, may well precede a study of the temples and festivals of Kumbakonam and its neighbourhood. The Mahamakham comes off once in 12 years when Jupiter passes through the sign of Leo (Simha). The last took place in March 1933, the previous ones

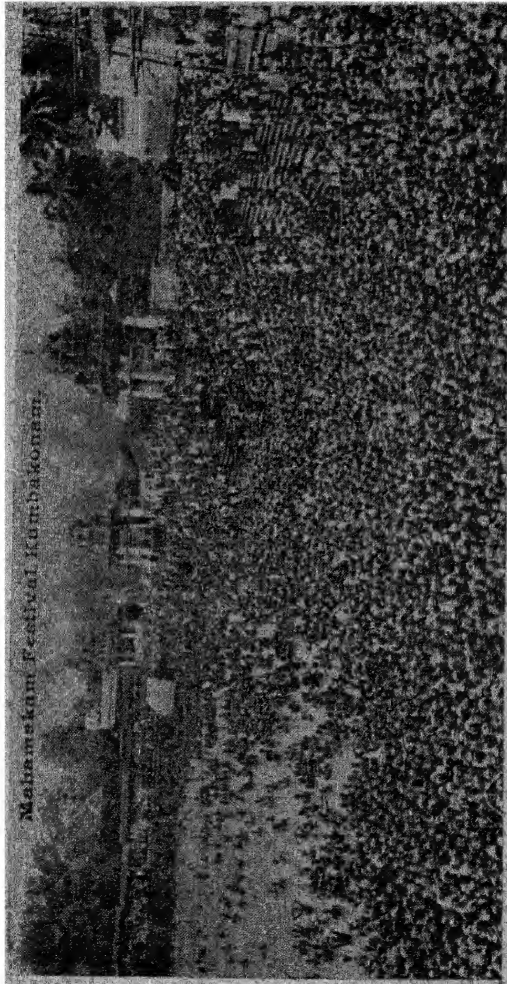


Floating Car Festival Kumbakonam.



THE FLOATING CAR

Mahamskam Festival Kumbakonam.



THE MAHAMAKHAM TANK

in 1921, 1909, 1897, 1885, etc. Every festival draws pilgrims from all parts of India, numbering more than a million. The Mahamakham tank, in which the purifying bath is made on the auspicious occasion once in 12 years and which is considered very sacred, is situated in the centre of the town covering a space of 20 acres. The importance of the festival and the Mahamakham is due to the belief that the nine sacred rivers of India appear on the Mahamakham day in this tank and give to those who bathe there the effects of a combined pilgrimage to all those nine sacred rivers. The legend in detail is as follows. At the end of each æon, the world is destroyed in a deluge by Lord Siva as a just punishment for human sins. After the last deluge, the world was reconstructed for the Kaliyuga by Brahma who, to favour mankind in the Kaliyuga, prayed to Siva to grant some boons to the erring mankind. Siva declared that, after the deluge, a pot full of divine nectar (amrita) would be visible on the face of the moving waters and would settle on a

certain holy spot. The pot with the divine contents reached Kumbakonam when Siva loosened an arrow at it. It immediately broke and its fragments fell at Kumbakonam. Hence the name of the place from Kumbha (pot). Wishing to obtain more favours on behalf of the humankind, Brahma entreated Siva, and Siva promised that the nine rivers—Nymphs of India—the Ganges, the Jumna, the Saraswati, the Narmada, the Godavari, the Kaveri, the Mahanadi, the Payoshni (Palar), and the Sarayu would manifest themselves in the sacred Mahamakham tank and help mankind to wash off their sins.

The various shrines and deities that line the tank fully answer to this legend and its importance. There is a shrine to Kasi Visvanatha on the bank of the tank and inside it is a shrine to the nine river-goddesses mentioned above. There is a pillared hall adjoining the Kasi Visvanatha temple, which is larger than the rest of the structures and contains rich sculptures. The western bank of this tank has another well-built shrine

to Siva under the name of Gautamesvara. The pagoda and towers of this temple afford an inspiring view. In the bed of the tank are to be found nine wells, which are said to represent the nine river-goddesses already mentioned. Each well is believed to receive its water from the respective river it represents.

#### THE MAHAMAKHAM FESTIVAL

The historic importance and age-long observance of the Mahamakham festival is borne out by inscriptions. There are traditions of kings and others being cured of chronic ailment after a bath in the tank. The celebrated King Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar seems to have attended a Mahamakham festival in his time. An inscription at the entrance to the north tower of the temple at Nagalapuram (Chingleput District) says that King Krishna Deva Raya visited the said village on his way to Kumbakonam to attend the Mahamakham festival. He also made gifts to a temple on the holy occasion.

Kumbakonam, like Conjeevaram, is a town teeming with temples. We will

content ourselves with describing the more important ones and the deities connected with them. Of the Siva temples, Kumbheswar's is the oldest and is most intimately connected with the Mahamakham legend and festival. The temple is situated on the spot which is said to be the one where the divine pot broken by Siva's arrow touched the ground. The deity Himself is, therefore, called Kumbheswara or Lord of the Pot.

A long and beautiful Hall known as Natanamantapa or Dancing Hall, measuring about 350 feet in length, leads to the main entrance to this great temple. Crossing the main entrance, we pass into another corridor which is of wider proportions. It is skirted on its right side by a small tank or pushkarani and on the left by a majestic, though, unfinished tower-base, popularly ascribed to the Raya kings of Vijayanagar. The far end of the Hall has a small and pretty looking tower. The temple itself is surmounted by a fine tower 128 feet high.

The Nageswara temple is another important Saiva shrine. Situated within

a couple of furlongs to the south of the Sarangapani temple, it has a beautiful new tower and the whole temple is well worth seeing. It contains within itself a separate shrine to the Sun—a type of shrine not usually met with elsewhere. Surya is said to have prayed to and obtained redemption from Siva at this place. For three days in the year, the Sun miraculously sheds his light on the Linga in the temple and is thus said to show his worship of Siva.

The next is Someswara temple adjoining the great Vishnu temple, associated in some respects with the Kumbha legend and taking a principal part in the Mahamakham festival.

Of the Vishnu temples, the Sarangapani temple is the holiest. A certain sage called Hemarishi invoked the aid of Vishnu from here. Vishnu answered his prayers by appearing with *saranga* (conch) in his hand. Hence the name of the Deity. There is a sculptural representation of this legend in the temple and also of the descent of Vishnu from Heaven in a chariot. A small shrine to the memory

of the sage above named exists on the northern bank of the tank called Pottamarai or Golden Lotus tank, situated behind the walls of the Sarangapani temple. The pagoda or central tower of the Sarangapani temple is one of the most imposing to be seen in South India. The Vimana is composed of 12 storeys and is 147 feet high. Festivals are celebrated on a grand scale in this temple, the Pottamarai tank also being part of the scene of celebrations.

The other Vishnu temples deserving mention are those of Ramasami and Chakrapani. They are situated, one at each end of the Bazaar at Kumbakonam. The former is believed to have been constructed by Raghunath Naik, king of Tanjore, in the 16th century when he consecrated and crowned his overlord, after rescuing him from the hands of rebels. It is said that the king discovered the idols of Rama, Sita and other deities in a tank at neighbouring Darasuram and installed them here. Sri Rama is sculptured in coronation robes. There are very fine sculptures and carvings in the Mahamantapa



and elsewhere in this temple of Vishnu in various forms, of Parvati, etc. There are also frescoes illustrating scenes from the Ramayana. The Dasara festival, due to the leanings of the Naik king probably, is celebrated on a vast scale in this temple.

The Chakrapani temple is said to deify Vishnu in the form of a Discus (chakra), which form was assumed by Him to put down the pride of Surya, who subsequently became His devotee. There is a statue of a Tanjore king holding a lamp in this temple.

### **Tiruvadaimarudur**

Of the neighbouring holy places, mention may be made first of Tiruvadamarudur, a few miles east of Kumbakonam. The Kaveri passes through this town. The principal Deity of the temple is styled Maha Linga (the great Linga). People suffering from mental afflictions are said to be cured by devotion and worship at this shrine. It is said that a Chola king, possessed of an evil demon on account of his killing

a Brahmin, was cured of it by the power of the Deity here. A similar story is told of king Varaguna Pandya of Madura, who was cured in this shrine. The sculptured representation of the ghost that possessed the Chola king is found in the gateway of the gopuram of the temple. The Tamil saint Pattinathu Pillaiyar sojourned in this village for a time and there is a sculpture of his in the eastern gopura.

### **Suryanar Koil**

Suryanar Koil, two miles away from the above, is the only place where there is a temple to the Sun and his worship is carried on. It was built by Kulottunga Chola who is believed to have borrowed this feature from the Gahadwal kings of Kanauj who were Sun-worshippers.

### **Tribhuvanam**

Tribhuvanam between Kumbakonam and Tiruvadaimarudur, has a temple dedicated to Siva under the name of Kampahareswar, because he cured a king

of Kampa (nervous shaking). The temple is built on the model of Tanjore and Darasuram temples.

## Swamimalai

Swamimalai, west of Kumbakonam, has a famous shrine built on a hillock, dedicated to Subramanya, locally called Swaminatha. He is said to have initiated his own parent, Siva, into the significance of the Manava Mantra. The Siva shrine is below the mound.

## Tirunageswaram

Four miles to the east of Kumbakonam is Tirunageswaram. It derives its name from the legend that the serpent, Adi Sesha, worshipped God Siva here. Sundays in the month of Karthigai (November-December.) are very sacred here and attract a very large number of pilgrims from the country around. The local tank is said to be very holy. The Tamil poet, Sekkilar, lived here and his sculpture is found in the temple.

## Tiruppurambiam

Tiruppurambiam, six miles from Kumbakonam, is a very ancient Saiva sacred place. Here the Deity, known as Dakshinamurti, is said to have granted salvation to a Pariah devotee. The name of the presiding Deity originally appears to have been Adityesvara, but was later on changed to Sakshiswara, since He appeared as a witness for a girl of the Chetti caste. It is also the scene of a famous battle of the Tamil kings.

## Uppaliappan Koil

Uppaliappan Koil, 3 miles to the east of Kumbakonam, is dedicated to Vishnu, who appeared here in the form of an old Brahmin. Lakshmi is also said to have been born under a Tulasi plant in the locality. The sage who brought the latter up, gave her in marriage to Vishnu and, on the former serving her husband with saltless food, begged Vishnu to excuse her on account of her inexperience and tender years. It is in keeping with this legend that saltless food

is offered in worship to the Deity here even to-day, and it is said that the prasada tastes well when eaten within the precincts of the temple.

## Darasuram

The last important holy place near Kumbakonam is Darasuram, two miles to the south-west. The Deity is known as Airavateswara and is said to have cured Yama himself (the God of Death) who was suffering, under a Rishi's curse, from a burning sensation all over the body. The tank in which Yama bathed is held very sacred and is known as Yamathirtham. It has a supply of fresh water from the Kaveri and is 228 feet in width and is the great object of attraction to the pilgrims. The temple, though its outer courts and towers have disappeared, is one of the best monuments of Dravidian architecture and abounds in beautiful sculptures and carvings.

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# TANJORE AND ITS SURROUNDING SHRINES

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TANJORE became historically a big shrine city after the advent of the Great Cholas to dominion in South India and the building of the great and magnificent temple to Brihadesvara by the Chola king Raja Raja I (985-1013 A.D.) There is an early tradition which explains the name of the town—connecting it with Vishnu and His exploits. A demon named Tarjan was dwelling in the locality and creating trouble to the inhabitants. God Vishnu appeared as Nilameghaperumal, killed the demon and gave peace and comfort to the people. There is a temple to Vishnu under the above name along with two others of ancient fame in a locality two miles north of Tanjore known as Vennar Bank.

The temple to Siva, known as the Big Temple, is the supreme of its kind in the whole of South India. Alike in

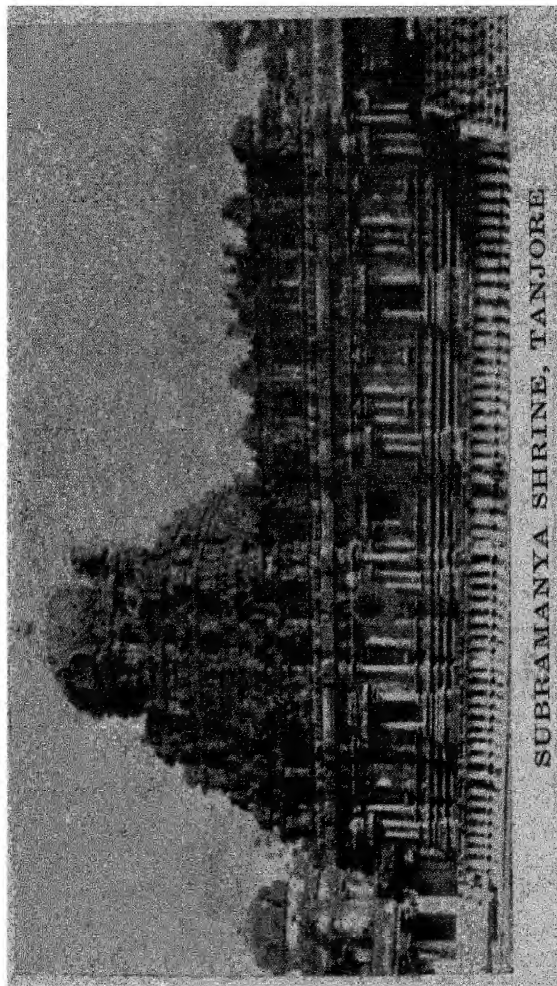


BRIHADESVARASWAMI TEMPLE

the magnificence and grandeur of its proportions, in the wealth of classic sculptural beauty and in the labour and resources involved, it is the greatest temple that has been built in South India. Its builder, Raja Raja I, was at once a pious devotee, a great statesman and warrior. He had extended the Chola dominions and carried on successful wars against the Chalukyas of the Deccan and the Godavari valley and the kingdom of Ceylon. The temple with its huge tower over the sanctum, its colossal Linga image and its monolithic Bull, stand as a supreme monument alike of his great devotion to religion and his imperial power.

The central tower of the shrine rises to a height of about 192 feet and is built entirely of stone. It is pyramidal in form and rises in stately proportions, being surmounted by a huge dome (sikhara) of stone weighting enormously. There are on its sides fine sculptures of Siva and other divinities reflecting the artistic ideas of the age. The sacred Bull (Nandi) in front of the shrine, cut out of a single stone and measuring several feet.





SUBRAMANYA SHRINE, TANJORE

in height, is a bold and magnificent piece of sculpture. The small shrine to Subramanya to the north-west of the main shrine has been deemed to be a most priceless work of art. Western writers like Fergusson have lavished their praise on it. It is a small temple—almost an inset—wrought with great skill and expressing beauty of workmanship in every detail and line. Ordinary granite has been worked to marble-like fineness and the whole edifice is covered with sculptures and ornamental details. The Big Temple also possesses a number of fine bronze sculptures one of which, that of Siva as the Dancer—Nataraja—has been considered by critics like O. C. Ganguli as the best of its kind. It formed the central figure of worship in one of inner shrines of the temple. Raja Raja I. not only built the temple, but lavishly endowed it with lands and revenues and jewels and established an army of servants and priests and others to carry on its service. The Temple was long the scene of high festivals and worship, and though time and political changes have

much attenuated them to-day, it is still a place of worship and of one or two historic festivals and is looked after by a Committee (Devasthanam). Raja Serfoji, one of the last Maratha rulers of Tanjore, restored the Temple to something like its former magnificence and had a genealogy of his family engraved on its walls by the side of the precious records of endowments given to it by the Cholas.

### Trivadi

Seven miles north of Tanjore there is a very sacred city known as Trivadi (correct name Tiru-ayyaru) with a temple dedicated to Siva under the name of Panchanadisvara. The city and temple are set on the northern bank of the river Kaveri—the most famous river in the Tamil land and hail from a very great antiquity. The original temple is said to have been built by a sage named Neymesa who, perplexed by want of funds, is said to have found them in the precincts of the temple itself in a spot covered by Nandi's foot—a spot still pointed out. The Cholas and other kings

of the South held the temple in great reverence and made lavish endowments to its deity. The inscriptions also refer to a gift by an Eastern Chalukyan king of the East Coast, who seems to have come to Tanjore to pay his respects to his Chola victor.

Tamil poets and saints have served the celebrated deity of Trivadi with as much fervour and devotion as the one at Chidambaram. Some of the great songs of Appar are addressed to this deity. To this day Trivadi holds a very important place in the traditions and religious life of South India.

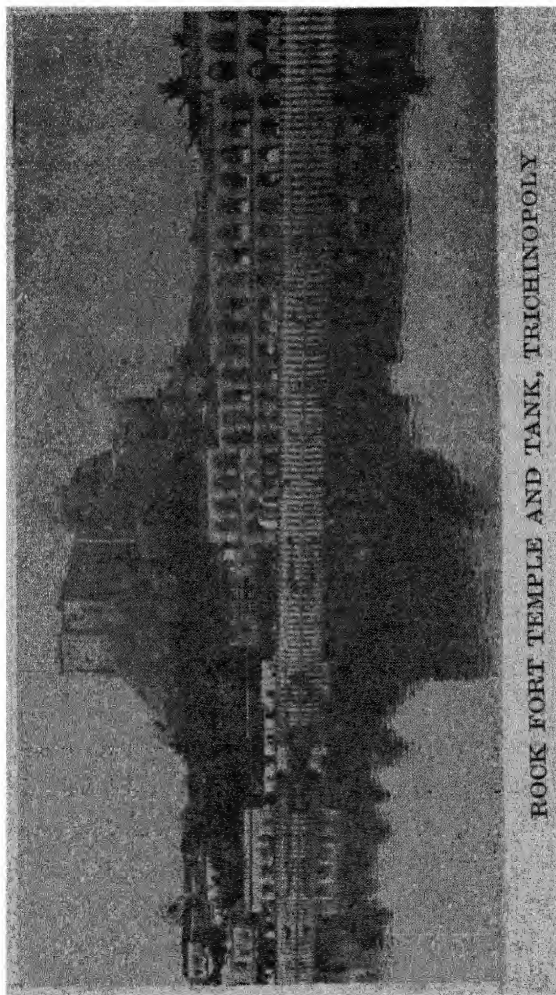
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## TRICHINOPOLY

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**T**RICHINOPOLY is known as Dakshina Kailas and as the place where the three-headed demon, Tusirasu, worshipped God and obtained boons from Him. It comes under the category of sacred cities chiefly on account of the temple on the rock in the midst of the town, dedicated to Vinayaka (Son of Siva) and known as Uchchi Pillayar Koil. The temple is situated on the top of a small rock, in which a beautiful stairway has been cut and commands a view of the whole town and the Kaveri which flows at a distance. It is indeed set in magnificent surroundings and is deservedly a source of joy to pilgrims. The deity is said to possess great sanctity and attracts a constant stream of devotees and worshippers all the year round.

A remarkable local legend connects this temple, as it does the more famous Vaishnava temple of Srirangam, with the epic story of the Ramayana. Rama, it is said, on returning to Ayodhya, gave to



ROCK FORT TEMPLE AND TANK, TRICHINOPOLY

his friend and devotee, Vibhishina, an image of himself for worship and instructed him not to place it on the ground. Vibhishina, on his way to his island-home with the image, halted at the vicinity of present Trichinopoly and there, meeting a Brahman youth, temporarily gave the image to him, telling him not to place it on the earth. The boy inadvertently did so and the image got rooted to the spot. This is the famous legend of the origin of Sri Ranganatha and His shrine at Sriranga. Vibhishina grew angry and the boy, seeing this, began to run. Vibhishina chased him to the summit of the rock where the boy stood transformed as Vinayaka (Son of Siva). In the meantime Vibhishina had struck the divine child on the face causing a depression therein. The extant image of Ganesa in the Uchchi Pillayar Koil bears out the legend and contains a depression in its face.

There is another shrine dedicated to Siva under the local name of Taiyumanavar, "one who became a mother", which is much revered by

the local people. The rock itself which formed the citadel of the old Fort, is known to Muhammadans as the Hill of Tayman (= Tayumanavar). The shrine of Tayumanavar was said to have been neglected by a Chola king of Uraiyur; and in consequence, the latter place which was the Chola capital was destroyed. The legend connected with it is a very interesting one and paints Siva as a peculiarly merciful and kind Divinity. A pious lady, advanced in pregnancy, had to cross the Kaveri, which she could not do as it was in floods at the time. Stranded on the bank and helpless, she had, however, a happy time of it, an unknown person, Siva Himself in disguise, appearing beside her as a midwife and attending on her. The local name of the deity is derived from this legend.

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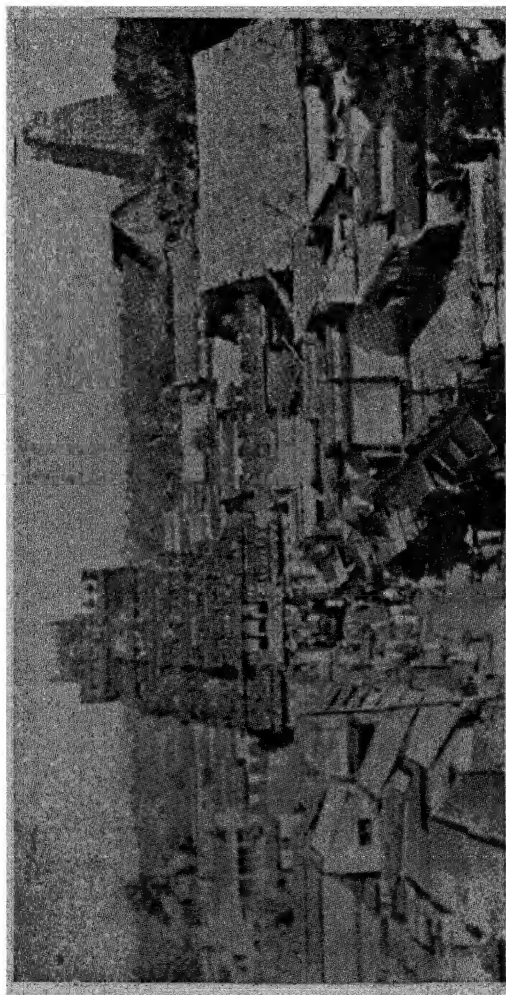


# SRIRANGAM

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THE temple to Sri Ranganatha in Srirangam has an all-India reputation and sanctity.

The story of the Deity as given in *Kovilolugu*, the well-known chronicle of the Srirangam temple and as handed down in sacred tradition is as follows:— God Sri Ranganatha was worshipped by Brahma in his heavenly abode. Ikshvaku, the founder of the Royal dynasty of Ayodhya, took it to his city for worship. At last Rama, the great hero of the Ikshvaku race, in gratitude and love for his great devotee Vibhishina, gave it to him to be worshipped by him. The legend goes on to state that, as Vibhishina was carrying it to the South, he halted at Srirangam and there, contrary to the injunction originally given to him, allowed the image to be deposited on the earth. Vibhishina found that the image could not be thereafter removed and so it was installed and consecrated at Srirangam, the beautiful island between two rivers.



SRI RANGANATHASWAMI TEMPLE, SRIRANGAM

The temple of Sri Ranganatha is one of the most ancient in South India. It has been successively patronised by all the notable monarchs of the numerous dynasties that have ruled over South India—the Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Hoysalas and lastly the Vijayanagar kings and their subordinates. The huge shrine and the numerous buildings and prakaras were all built by these ancient kings and attest to the importance and sanctity of the great South Indian shrine to Vishnu.

One Dharma Varman Chola is said to have built, according to the *Kovilolugu*, a Tamil work narrating, the numerous endowments to and stages in the growth of the temple, the central shrine (Tiruvannaligai). Killi Chola is said to have renovated the temple after a huge flood in the Kaveri had covered the temple and other structures with sand.

The Hoysala kings, one of whom was converted to the Vaishnava faith by Ramanuja, were the next patrons. Narasimha II, called in the inscriptions. Vira Somesvara, is said to have built

one of the *mantapas* of the temple and the 1000-pillared mantapa was begun by an officer who served under one of the ministers of Vira Somesvara.

The most celebrated royal name in the history of Srirangam is, however, Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I. (1251 A.D. to 1271), who was one of the most brilliant and victorious of the Pandyan kings of Madura. The Kovilolugu says that he defeated the Chola, Chera and Vallala (Hoysala) sovereigns and others and made munificent gifts to the temple from the immense booty acquired. A minister of his made innumerable repairs to the temple. The thousand-pillared *mantapa* was completed by him. He presented numerous gold images, gold plates, gold flagstaff, golden tubs, lamp-stands, dishes, and a golden boat for the festival. Sundara Pandya is said to have expended 18 lakhs of gold-pieces for covering the temple with gold plates and another 18 lakhs for other purposes and thus acquired the name of one "who covered the temple of Srirangam with gold". The temple was sacked by Malikkafur and was

reconsecrated after over 60 years by the Vijayanagara generals.

The early Nayaks and their officers made valuable presents to the temple. One Gopanna Odayar is said to have granted 52 villages for the benefit of the temple. Virupanna Odayar had his tulabhara ceremony performed in the temple. It formed a battle-field in the Anglo-French wars of the Carnatic and served as a place of refuge. Jambukesvaram or Tiruvanaikaval (the sacred elephant grove) is to the east of Srirangam in the island and enshrines the Appu Linga (which is always immersed in water)—one of the five Lingas the fire aspect of which has been deified at Tiruvannamalai and the ethereal aspect at Chidambaram. It is closely associated with a Saiva saint, king Kochchengannan who was a spider in a former birth and worshipped God by weaving a web that prevented leaves falling on the image and was killed in a fight with an elephant which was also a devout worshipper. The temple goes back to the early Chola times. The worship of the Goddess, Akhilandesvari, in the temple is held to be of peculiar potency.

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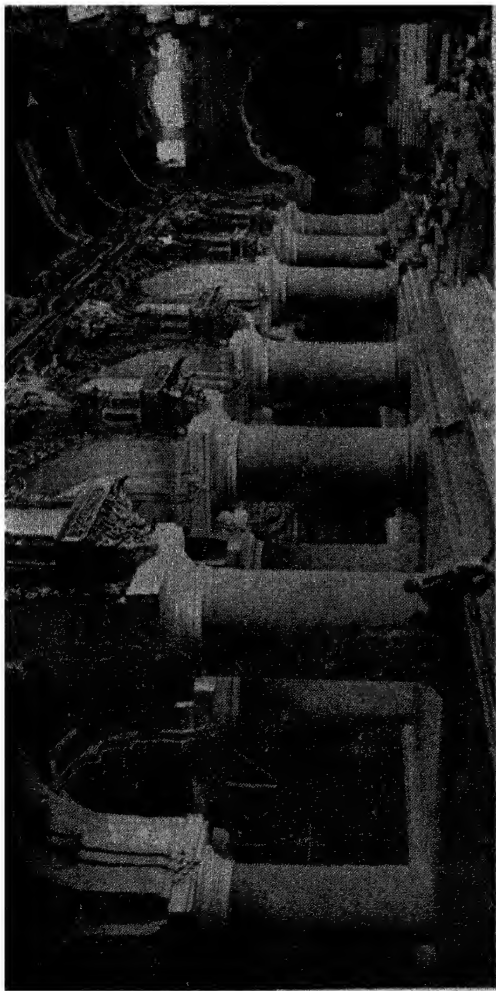
# MADURA

## AND ITS NEIGHBOURING SHRINES

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**M**ADURA (S. I. Railway, South India) is one of the most famous of sacred places in Southern India, and its neighbouring shrines, those at Tiruppurankunram Alagar Koil, Palani, and Srivilliputtur attract a large number of pilgrims all through the year. Madura is situated in a beautiful country on the banks of the river Vaigai, with a range of five hills dominating the background. It is a historic city, having been for thousands of years the capital of kings and the seat of learning.

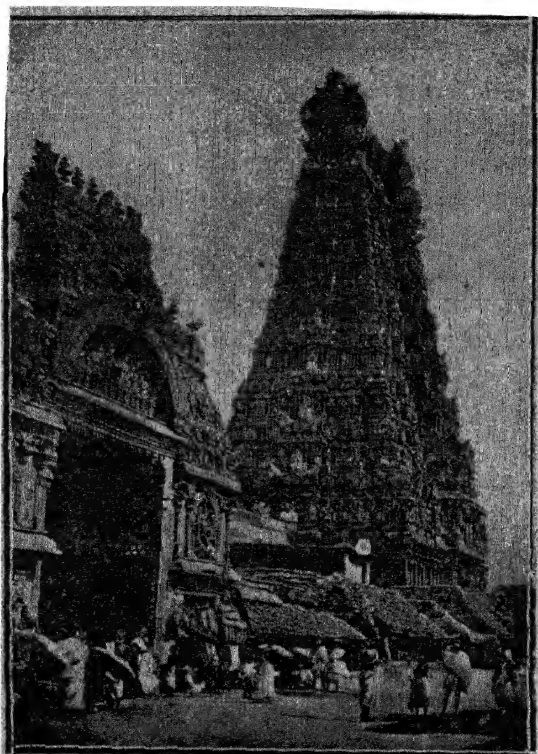
Even before the dawn of the Christian era, Madura had become the capital of an illustrious line of Tamil kings, the Pandyas, who flourished in 1000 A.D. Under them, the city grew in wealth and the cultivation of learning and the civilized arts and has thus come to be known as the "Athens of Southern India". Her trade extended as far as Asia Minor and the



TIRUMAL NAICK PALACE—MADURAI

Mediterranean, and her goods were sought after and prized by the subjects of the Cæsars. Internally also, Madura was famous; she was the mother of arts and culture. The first great works in Tamil known as the Sangam Classics were composed by poets, and singers patronised by the kings of Madura and are said, according to a well-known legend, to have been promulgated in an ancient academy (Madurai Sangam) in this city. The early Pandyas grew to greatness after they abandoned their first capital. The kings of the First Empire (fifth to ninth centuries) enhanced its reputation. The Pandyan grew in wealth and territory and, after the decline of the Cholas, rose to overlordship of South India in the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. They subsequently fell and the city and kingdom passed into the hands of the Naiks, of whom the most popular ruler was Tirumala Naik, who reigned between 1623 and 1659 A.D. He added to the beauty of Madura by constructing several magnificent buildings including the Palace. Madura passed into the hands



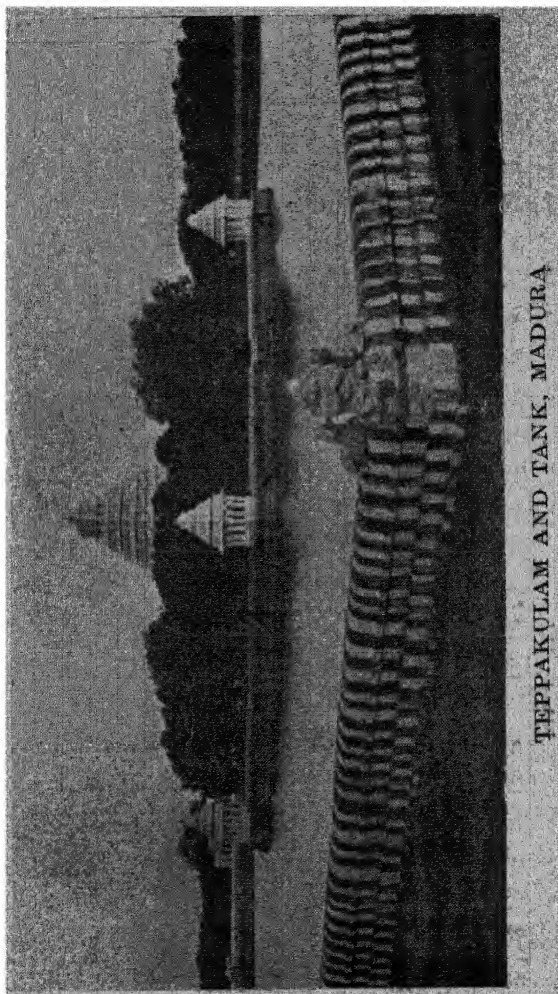


GOPURAM OF THE MADURA TEMPLE

of the English Company in 1792 after being ruled for a time by the Nawabs of the Carnatic.

The chief temple of Madura and the source of its attraction and sacredness is the great temple of Goddess Minakshi situated in the very heart of the town. It has been considered to be the most magnificent temple in South India by savants and lovers of art. Its huge towers, its corridors, its thousand-pillared hall, its wealth of sculptures, all richly justify the fame of the temple. The temple is dedicated to Siva known locally as Sundareswar and His Consort known as Minakshi "the fish-eyed Goddess". The temple consists of two shrines, to Sundareswar and Minakshi respectively.

The legends surrounding God Sundareswar and His Consort are well known throughout Tamil India and may be referred to as they are interesting and show a good deal of local colouring and poetry. Goddess Minakshi was born a Pandyan Princess and was wooed by several suitors. She vowed, herself being a warrior, that she would marry none but



TEPPAKULAM AND TANK, MADURA

him who could outmatch her and prove himself her master. She said that she would marry him who defeated her in fair combat at any one of the eight directions or quarters (points of the compass). So her suitors entered the lists to combat with Minakshi, resplendent with beauty and armed with bow and arrow. The first seven combatants were defeated by her but the eighth, Siva Himself, disguised as Sundareswar, defeated Minakshi at the eighth point of the compass, the north-east. So Goddess Minakshi became his prize and ever since she and her Divine Husband have lived in happy union and bliss in holy Madura.

The above sacred legend is commemorated every year in the leading festival of the Madura temple, known as the *Chittrai* festival, falling in April-May. For nine days, various feastings and processions are held and on the tenth day, the betrothed divine couple are united in marriage at the Kalyana Mantapam, a beautiful and richly adorned Hall in the Minakshi temple. On the eleventh day, the god and goddess are gorgeously dressed and taken in gay

huge cars round the four streets of Madura city and are then taken back to their respective shrines.

The Pudumantapam in front of the shrine is a magnificent piece of Nayak architecture, and the large Teppakulam is another relic of their rule.

### **Tiruppurankunram**

Tiruppurankunram lies five miles southwest of Madura (being the next station on the Railway) and has a very renowned and ancient shrine by a lofty rock dedicated to Sri Subramanya. People in South India regard six places as being the principal and cherished centres of Subramanya, the above being one of them. It was here, it is said, that Subramanya obtained the hand of Daivayanai, the daughter of Indra. Suran and Padma, two mighty demons (Asuras) were tormenting the gods. Indra, the king of the gods, promised his daughter's hand to any one who could vanquish the demons. Subramanya came forward and vanquished the demons in doughty combat. The place is also associated with one of the greatest poets in the Tamil tongue, Nakkirar,

author of devotional poems addressed to Subramanya, known as Tirumurugarrupadai, a Sangam classic. A demon had confined in a cave in the hills 999 men and was waiting for the 1000th man to make up the number for a huge sacrifice. Nakkirar the poet happened to be the thousandth. The 999 men, who had gone before, cursed Nakkirar who made up the number and was thus about to become the immediate cause of their death. Thereupon Nakkirar sang his inimitable Tirumurugarrupadai invoking the aid and succour of Sri Subramanya. The God appeared, killed the demon, set free the 1,000 captives. Hence great power and sanctity are attached to the singing of the above poem, which is held to save men in times of trouble. There is a shrine at the top of the hill at Tiruppurankunram to Siva in the form of Kasi Visvanatha said to have been brought down here to please Nakkirar. A carved image standing with pious reverence before the Linga in this shrine is pointed out to be that of the sage-poet Nakkirar.

## Palani

The temple of Palani, dedicated to Subramanya (situate on the line from Dindigul) is equally, if not more famous. The temple is situate on a majestic hill, nearly 500 feet high and attracts pilgrims throughout the year. The image of the deity is said to be a very fine piece of sculpture. The most usual form of propitiating this deity and doing homage at his shrine, is to bear what is called a *kavadi*. The bearer bathes in the adjoining river Shanmuganadhi, shoulders the *kavadi*, bears it along to the accompaniment of music and vociferous repetition of Subramanya's names. On entering the presence of the deity, the *kavadi* is laid down, and the devotees then have abhishekam performed. This consists in pouring over the image a large quantity of a delicious mixture of honey, sugar and crushed plantain fruits. Sometimes the divine bath consists of mere sacred ash. Many miracles are said to be performed in this shrine, like dreams and happy

apparitions or the bringing to life of dead creatures which are sometimes carried in the *kavadis*. These have added to the popularity and sacredness of the place.

## Alagar Temple

Twelve miles to the north-east of Madura stands the well-known temple of Sounderaraja Perumal or Alagar (the Beautiful) who is the favourite and chosen deity of the *Kallars*. Round about this ancient temple are the ruins of an old fortified town. The well-known Nayak king, Thirumala Naik, had a palace in this town known as Alagapuri, it being his favourite place of residence when he was a ruler.

The Alagar temple is an ancient one and abounds in beautiful carvings and figures. There is a hall inside the temple known as the Vasanta Mantapam, whose walls and ceilings are emblazoned with fine frescoes illustrative of the story of Ramayana. The temple is said to be guarded perpetually by a local Tamil deity, Karuppannasami, to whom are dedicated the two massive wooden doors



of the shrine. The doors are covered with sandal paste and have a peculiar local reputation. "The door-way is referred to generally as Karuppan's sanctum and also specially when solemn affirmations have to be made. It is believed that the man who swears to a falsehood here and passes through the gate of eighteen steps with the lie on his lips will speedily come to a miserable end. Many a civil suit is settled by the parties agreeing to allow the court's decree to follow the affirmation made in this manner. A fee of Rs. 5-8-0 is charged by the temple to record such affirmation made before the deity."

### **Srivilliputtur**

Srivilliputtur a Vaishnava centre is another of the shrines near Madura. The place is associated with the memory of Andal, a Brahmin poetess and a gifted singer in Tamil, counted among the Twelve Alvars. There was a pious Brahmin in this place by name Periyalwar, who devoted himself to the keeping of a little garden and daily

making flower-garlands for the deity in the local temple of Srivilliputtur. One day when Periyalwar was digging round a basil plant, a child miraculously appeared which grew into the gifted Andal. Periyalwar brought her up lovingly and perhaps taught her the elements of Vaishnavite myth and piety. More than his teaching, those flower-garlands which he daily made seemed to have profoundly affected the pious mind of Andal. Attracted by them, she wore them in her tresses before their transmission to the deity of the temple and the devout Periyalwar, seeing Andal wearing the flower-garlands one day, grew angry. The deity himself suddenly appeared and told Periyalwar that he wanted only those garlands profaned by Andal, and thus testified to the supreme devotion of Andal. The story of Andal, mysterious from the beginning, ends in mystery. Inquired on attaining womanhood if she would marry any, the girl-mystic replied that she would "marry none but God Himself", and the saintly parent, so the legend runs, literally led her to the side of the deity at Srirangam, Vishnu's chief

image on earth, and there the divine bride disappeared.

She has sung several beautiful poems in Tamil, which are daily recited in Vaishnava temples, two of which are the well-known Tiruppavai and Tiruppalliezuchchi. A shrine has been built to Andal in her place of birth, and here and elsewhere in Vaishnava shrines, worship is perpetually offered to her image. The shrine of Andal of Srivilliputtur rivals that of the principal deity of the place and is the most important, and elaborate festivals are held in her honour here. Andal, as the typical embodiment of love for God Ranga, has enjoyed greater sanctity and fame than her northern counterpart, Saint Mirabai, who disappeared into the image of her beloved Lord Krishna.

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## RAMESVARAM

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**R**AMESVARAM, a small island situated in the Bay of Bengal, off the coast of the Madura District and separated from it by the Pamban Channel, has a sanctity and importance not exceeded by any other place of pilgrimage in India. Dhanushkoti, about 15 miles to the south of Ramesvaram, and forming the terminus of the Railway line, serves as the sacred Bathing Ghat to Holy Ramesvaram. They both derive their importance and sacredness from their traditional association with the presence and doings of Sri Rama, the hero and deity of the epic Ramayana.

Rama, it is well-known, arrived here with his monkey-host to cross over to Lanka. After his victory over Ravana and return, it is stated, he was advised by the sages to worship Siva in the form of a Linga to wash off the sin of having slain Ravana and his hosts. Rama's faithful servant,

Hanuman, the monkey-hero, was sent to the Himalayas to fetch a Linga for installation and worship. An auspicious day had been fixed—the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Ani—for installing the image. Hanuman did not return by that date and so an image of Linga made out of sea-sand, lying near by, by Rama's divine consort Sita, was installed with due ceremony. Hanuman arrived subsequently and, finding his labours vain, tried to pull out the sand-made Linga, but all his attempts failed. At last Rama, in order to appease his servant, installed the stone Linga brought by Hanuman to the north of the one already established and ordered that worship may be offered to the image brought by his faithful servant first. The Linga in the great shrine of Ramesvaram, being thus the one installed by Sri Rama himself, is considered supremely sacred and is an object of worship to all sections of the Hindus in India.

The Ramesvaram Temple is a large and magnificent one. Its enclosure measures 900 feet by 700 feet. It has three courts with gopuras (towers) in the outer court in all



EAST GOPURAM—RAMESVARAM

the four directions. The Rajas of Ramnad, who are called Sethupathis or Lords of Sethu or Ramesvaram, were largely instrumental in adding to the original temple; and their representations in sculpture are to be found in the colonnades in the outer court of the Ramesvaram temple. The courts in the Ramesvaram temple with their majestic colonnades and high ceilings form its most attractive and memorable feature.

There is also a temple to Vishnu under the name of Setu Madhava whose image is made of white marble. Every visit to Ramesvaram must comprise in the end the worship of this Deity who is considered the warden of the holy place.

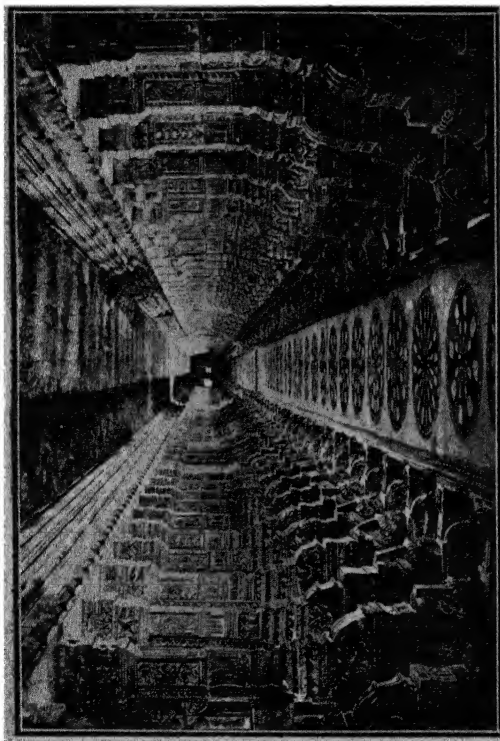
The bath at Dhanushkoti, which should precede worship at the Ramesvaram shrine, can be done every day in the year, the place being so holy that there is no restriction as to the days when the bath should be had. The waters here represent the junction of Mahodadhi (the Bay of Bengal) and Ratnakara (the Indian Ocean). Sculptural representations of both these Ocean-Gods exist by the side of the big

Bull in the Ramesvaram shrine in front of the Linga. One may refer to a curious figure half-buried in the ground near this Bull. Tradition identifies it as that of a non-Hindu thief who, when attempting to rob the temple treasury, got transfixed to the place and became stone-blind. Besides Dhanushkoti, there are other sacred waters—tanks, wells and the like—numbering some twenty-four, situated in and around the Ramesvaram temple wherein the pious pilgrim is bound to bathe. They are said to possess miraculous properties of curing several diseases.

There are eleven important lingas specially important to this temple, and these are said to have been founded, respectively, by Hanuman, Sri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Nala, the builder of the Setu bridge, Angada, Nila, Jambavan, Vibhishina and Indra.

Daily worship in the Ramesvaram temple is carried on 6 times a day. The last of them—the Palli-arai procession as it is called—is a very picturesque ceremony and may be described. Every night the Amman (Goddess of the temple





CORRIDOR OF RAMESVARAM TEMPLE

who has got a separate Shrine) is decorated in the Navasakti or Sukravara (Friday) Hall in front of the Amman shrine. She is then taken in procession in a golden-plated palanquin to the God's temple when the image of the God is placed in the palanquin. The procession with both the deities then continues through the third court and finally ends in the Amman shrine. The idols are then taken out and placed in a *Swing* in the Palli-Arai (bed-chamber) in the Hall within the Amman shrine. The chief annual festivals of the temple are—Pratishtanga in the month of Ani, Ramanathaswami's marriage in Adi (July-August) and Mahasivarathri which is celebrated with very great ceremony.

There are a number of sacred places around Rameswaram, consecrated to the memory of Rama, and visited by pilgrims to Ramesvaram. In a place called Uppur some 20 miles to the north-east of Ramnad there is a Vinayaka temple, whose image is said to have been installed by Rama himself. Devipatnam or

Navapashanam, 10 miles north-east of Ramnad, contains a temple to the Nine Planets, said to have been installed by Sri Rama Himself for worship. Tiruppullani or Darbhasayanam, 6 miles south of Ramnad, is remembered and cherished as the place where Rama lay on a bed of grass (Kusa) awaiting the Ocean-God. Both figures of Rama lying on his bed of grass and the Ocean-God are to be found here.

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## TINNEVELLY TEMPLES

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**T**HE district of Tinnevelly contains a number of sacred shrines dedicated to Siva and Vishnu. River Tambraparani, which flows through it, has long been known to fame, being mentioned in the Puranas well-known to Græco-Roman geographers also and earlier works and is deemed one of the sacred rivers of India. The chief shrines lie on its banks or are to be found in places not far distant from them. The kings of Madura, the Pandyas and their successors, the Nayaks and their feudatory vassals often moved their capitals to this district and most of the present-day temples are the products of their munificence and piety.

### Tinnevelly Town

Tinnevelly town contains a shrine to Siva rebuilt by Visvanatha, the founder of the Nayak dynasty of Madura. It is

a very large temple beautifully built and containing many good sculptures. The late Mr. Fergusson speaks of the temple in appreciative language.

### **Srivaikuntam**

The Vaishnavite shrines of the district may be deemed a close-knit group lying round Srivaikuntam on the banks of the Tambraparani, all within a radius of five miles. This group consists of nine Vaishnavite temples—nine important temples in the list of 108 Vaishnava temples or Tirupathis—and they are all held in very great reverence by the Vaishnavas of South India. They all lie on either side of the Tambraparani river and contain large beautiful temples set in fine natural scenery of mountain, river and grove. Huge festivals are celebrated in these temples which attract numerous pilgrims every year.

### **Alwar Tirunagari**

The most important of them, beside Sri Vaikuntam, is Alwar Tirunagari, the birth-place of Nammalwar, the best known and greatest of Tamil Vaishnava Alvars

or hymners. Here he was discovered as a child in the cavity of a tamarind tree, at first dumb. When at last he broke into speech, he gave out the magnificent and mystical poems in Tamil in praise of Vishnu, known as Tiruvoymoli or Tamil Veda. Festivals in his honour are performed every year. And the tamarind tree under which he was found, or an offshoot thereof, still exists within the temple with a stone platform running round it. Nanguneri and Tirukkurungudi have also to be noticed as prominent shrines of the Vaishnavas, in the neighbourhood.

### Tiruchendur

Of the Saivite temples, the most renowned is the Tiruchendur temple situate on the sea-shore at the far end of the district. It is dedicated to Subrahmanya or Murugakadavul as he is called in the Tamil land.

The temple is built on a rock close by the shore of the sea or portions of it and some of its sculptures may be said to have been hewn therefrom.

The present temple hails from the days of king Ugrapandyan of Madura, the fifth of the traditional Pandyan line of kings. But the place is a very ancient one and has been famous from the very beginning of Tamil history. One of the great Tamil classics—Tirumurugarrupadai, forming part of Pattupattu—composed in the first centuries of the Christian era, is dedicated to, and is in praise of, the deity of this place among other deities. The poems are full of high devotion and poetry and describe in spirited and sublime language the exploits of the deity. The place itself is described in the poems as Tiruchiralaivai.

The deity and the shrine have never ceased to enthral subsequent poets in Tamil. Pakalikuthar, who was strangely enough a Vaishnava poet, has composed a set of fine poems in the deity's honour, known as Pillai Tamil. A more modern and much popular work is the Tirupukal of Arunagirinathar.

The temple and town are set in beautiful surroundings in the midst of sea and mountain. The cool breeze.

that blows from the sea and alleviates the heat of summer months, the blue waters of the ocean, the golden sunrise every morning—all these have given a perpetual joy to the innumerable pilgrims and devotees who flock all through the year.

The central image of Subrahmanya in this temple is that of a young and beautiful ascetic, rapt in contemplation and worship of Siva. He holds in one hand a rosary of beads and in the other plucked flowers to be offered in worship of Siva.

There are a number of sacred pools or waters—24—in the place wherein the devotee is to bathe. They all are said to possess great curative properties.

There are numerous rest-houses and pillared mantapas in the locality, some of them owned by the great Matadhipathis of South India—those of Tiruvaduthurai and Dharmapuram.

### **Sankaranarayana Koil**

A most interesting shrine of this district is the one known as Sankaranarayana Koil situate a few miles from Tinnevelly. It is said that the great Pandyan king,



Ugra Pandyan, was holding his capital in, and ruling his kingdom from, the neighbourhood of Tinnevely, and that the God of Madura, in order to please the king who was thus living away from his shrine, appeared here in the form of a Sivalinga at the foot of an ant-hill. It is further said that, in order to please Parvati and to convince two Naga kings by name, Sankha and Padma, that Siva and Vishnu are one, the deity took on the form of Narayana also. A fine legend associates God Vishnu with the foundation of the temple. Hence the dual aspect of the divinity and its name Sankaranarayana. The temple and deity are held in very great reverence by the people of Tinnevely and the neighbouring districts.

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# TRAVANCORE

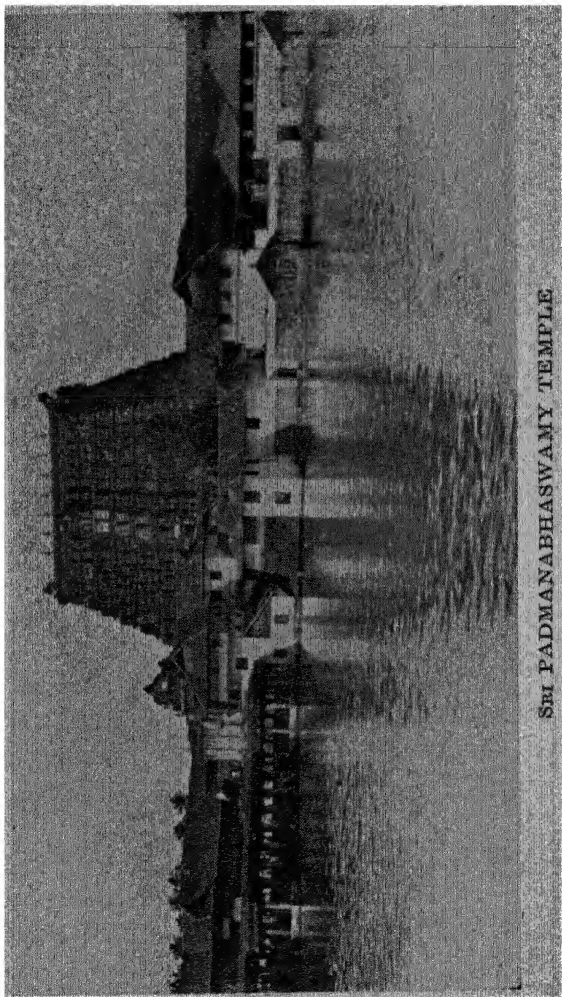
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## Trivandrum

SRI PADMANABHA : THE PATRON DEITY  
OF TRAVANCORE

THE Ananta-Padmanabha Temple at Trivandrum is one of the most famous temples in South India and makes Trivandrum, the southern-most royal city of India, a place of pilgrimage.

The story of the temple and the deity therein is based on a touching and popular legend and shows that they had their origin in the piety of a Pulaya and his wife. The spot where the temple now stands was originally a jungle called Anantankadu. There in that jungle lived a Pulaya and his wife who obtained their livelihood by cultivating a large rice field near their hut. One day as the Pulaya's wife was working in the field, she heard the cry of a baby close-



SRI PADMANABHASWAMY TEMPLE

by and on search found it a beautiful child which to her eyes shone with divine features and marks and which she was afraid to touch. However, after bathing and purifying herself, she fed the crying baby with her breast milk and left it again under the shade of a tree. As soon as she returned, a five-headed cobra came, removed the infant to a hole in the tree and sheltered it from the sun with its outspread hood, thus making manifest that this child was an incarnation of Vishnu. While it remained there, wonder-struck at this divine apparition in the form of a child, the Pulaya and his wife daily made offerings to the baby milk and conjee (rice-gruel) in a cocoanut-shell. Tidings of this miraculous event and the Pulaya's piety reached the ears of the sovereign of Travancore, who immediately ordered a temple to be erected on the spot. This legend, connected with the chiefest and most celebrated temple of Travancore, furnishes a remarkable background for the recent historic proclamation issued by a worthy successor of the ancient king who

built the temple, admitting the members of the Depressed Classes to free access and worship in all the temples of his realm.

The temple, with such hallowed origins and built by a pious ancient king, acquired additional importance in the course of Travancore royal history, and its deity became the tutelary deity of the kings and almost the patron of Travancore, about the middle of the 18th century when the kingdom was being consolidated. In the middle of the eighteenth century, a powerful but God-fearing king, Rajaraja Martanda Varma, found himself face to face with internal troubles and his newly acquired dominions also were seething with unrest. For the better safety of the ancient house to which he belonged, and to show his resolve to rule justly and in accordance with religion, he determined on the bold step of dedicating his whole kingdom to Sri Padmanabha, the tutelary deity of his House. Accordingly on the morning of the 5th day of Makaram in the year 925 of the Malayalam era (corresponding to January 1750 A.D.) the king, accompanied

by the heir-apparent and all other male and female members of his household and his prime minister, proceeded to the shrine of Sri Padmanabha, where all the priests and yogakars had already assembled. His Highness laid the State sword on the Othakal Mantapam and made over the whole territory belonging to him to the deity and assumed its management as the vassal of the deity. From this day forward he and his successors have styled themselves Sri Padmanabha Dasas, meaning servants of Sri Padmanabha. This magnificent stroke of policy had very good effect and the people of the country have ever since regarded the country as the possession of God and the person of the Sovereign as His representative and servant. The kings of Travancore take personal part in the worship and festivals of the temple and regard the temple with the highest reverence.

The temple is not important to Travancore alone. It is an immensely sacred place to the Vaishnavas of South India. It is one of the 108 Tirupathis (or

sacred places) which they are enjoined to visit. Their Alwars and poets have sung of Sri Padmanabha, and some of their most leading teachers, Yamunacharya, Ramanuja and the rest, have made arduous journeys to see Sri Padmanabha and worship Him at this shrine.

The worship of the temple is carried on in a very orthodox manner, in strict accordance with the Agamas, by a number of priests recruited from the leading Nambudiri families of Malabar. The officiating priests are put on the strictest rules of orthodoxy and religious purity, they not being even allowed to visit their own homes during their officiating period. In memory of the touching legend that the deity was first fed with conjee in a cocoanut shell by a Pulaya, the offering to the deity still continues to be the same conjee in a golden vessel shaped like a cocoanut shell.

The annual festivals of this temple, in which the king himself takes part, are full of interest and are thus described in the *Travancore State Manual*: "There are two Ootsavams celebrated annually,

one in the month of Minam (March) and the other in Tulam (October). The first day called Kodiyettu or hoisting of the God's flag and the last, the Aurat, are attended with elaborate ceremonials and these occasions draw thousands of spectators from the neighbouring villages. On the night of the ninth day, the Maharajah (of Travancore) goes in procession in front of the God for what is called vettai (Hunt) to a place a furlong outside the temple, which in the ancient days must have been thick jungle infested by wild animals. The appearance of the mock-hunt is well kept up, as perfect silence is observed till the place is reached where the Maharajah draws a bow and shoots with arrows at three cocoanuts placed there as symbolic of wild beasts. The Maharajah does the hunting as God's deputy. After this ceremony, the gods are accommodated in a separate place and are taken to their original seats only after the Aurat or bath which comes off on the next day.

"The Aurat is an imposing ceremony. After the usual rounds in the temple,



the gods Padmanabha, Krishna and Narasimha, seated in different Vahanas, (conveyances) are carried in a grand procession to be bathed in the sea, the procession being headed by the Maharajah, sword in hand, accompanied by the other male members of the royal family, his personal attendants and body-guards. The Nayar Brigade with their arms, banners flying and band playing, the huge State elephants and horses richly caparisoned, all the Hindu officers of the State, the Sudras before the Sovereign and the Brahmins behind him, but all in front of the gods. An immense concourse of people of all castes and religions line the road-side to view the procession—a magnificent sight possible only in a Hindu Native State. The procession, including the Maharajah, moves on foot all the three miles to the sea. After sunset, the images are taken to the sea and bathed when the Maharajah also bathes, and the festival closes with the return of the gods to the temple and the hoisting down of the flag.”

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## Aranmula

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**A**RANMULA village, 2 miles from Tiruvella, is situated in a fine spot on the river Pamba and contains a shrine to Vishnu in the form of Parthasarathi or Divine Charioteer. The temple is believed to have been founded by the Pandava prince himself.

The deity, Aranmula Appan as he is called, is sacred to children. Childless persons propitiate at this shrine and are said to be rewarded. The great festivals of the temple are, therefore, connected with children and thus give the temple a unique place among the religious resorts of India. The village of Aranmula abounds in arecanut palms, and there in the middle of January, pilgrims and children come trooping in large numbers. The children gather the dry leaves of the palms for days before the actual festival date. They are heaped in

front of the deity inside the temple with ceremony. They are then set fire to with due ceremonial and prayer. The children dance and sing and chant their prayers round the roaring flames, while elder folk look on.

On ordinary days, the pilgrim propitiates the deity by giving free oil baths to children and then feasting them. There is no distinction of caste; children of all castes are given oil bath and food.

The river ghat in front of the temple abounds in fish considered to be sacred. The fish are fed by pilgrims with rice and scraped cocoanut kernel. Mothers who are unable to breastfeed their children for want of milk are said to be cured of their defect by this piscatory charity and kindness.

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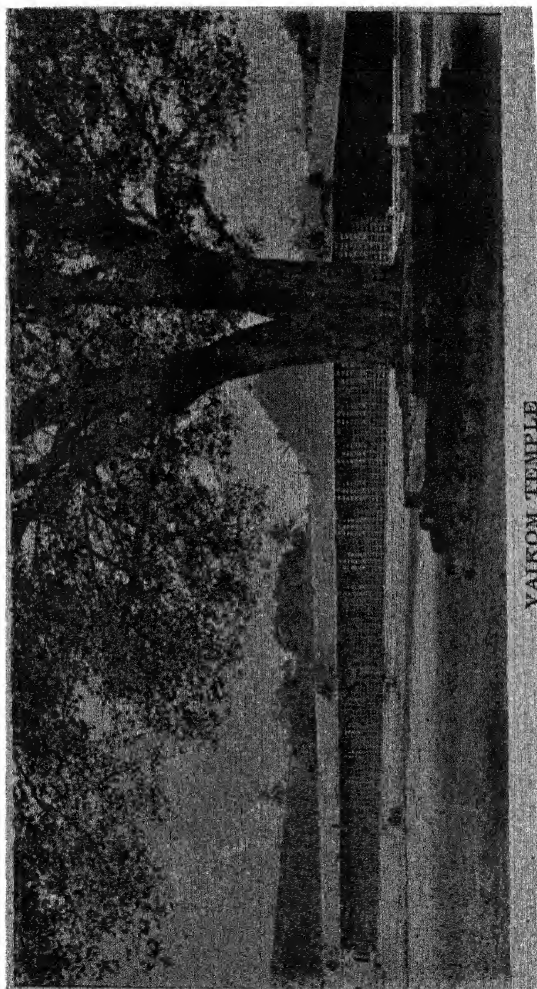
# Vaikom

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DEDICATED TO SIVA

**V**AIKOM contains a celebrated temple dedicated to Siva. It is said that a Rakshasa Khara was presented with three lingams by Siva for worship and that during his journey, one of the lingams dropped to the earth in the place now called Vaikom and that, in spite of his efforts, he could not lift back the lingam. So he immediately consecrated the lingam at the spot where it fell and built a shrine over it, which is the present shrine of Vaikom.

Legend also associates sage Vyaghrapada of Chidambaram and the great hero Parasurama with the worship of the deity at Vaikom. The great feature of the temple is the feeding of innumerable Brahmins every day. The management of the temple was long in the hands of the Brahmans of the locality who possessed



VAIKOM TEMPLE

vast powers. As evidence of their rights even now the temple elephant is sent to the door of each Nambudiri house (*illom*) in the city before the festival begins in token of inviting them, and the annual festival begins only after the Nambudiri Brahmins assemble in the temple and give their formal consent. Their powers of management of the temple were, however, taken away and vested in the Government.

The two chief festivals of the temple are: the Ashtami festivals in the months of Kumbham (March-April) and Virischikam (November-December).

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## Varkala

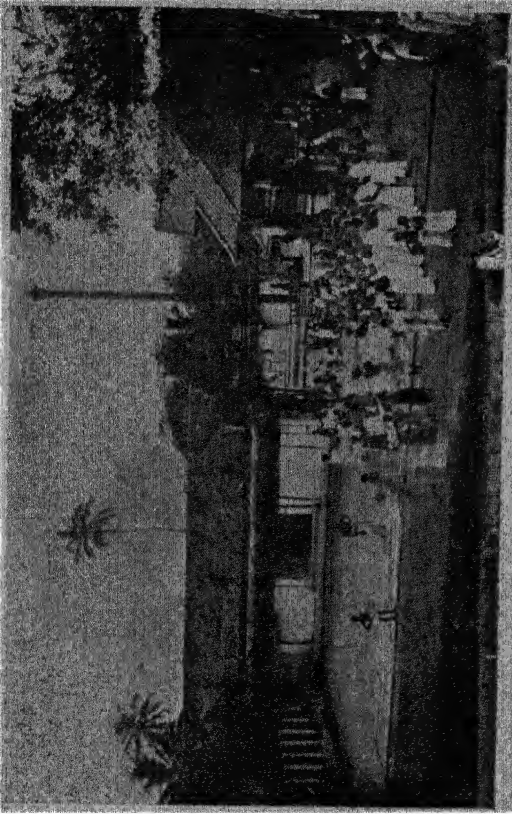
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### THE TEMPLE OF JANARDHANA

VARKALA is one of the most ancient shrine-centres of Travancore, its temple to Janardhana being as renowned and sacred as that of Sri Padmanabha at Trivandrum. The town and temple are set in beautiful surroundings near the

sea-shore. The place is also a noted health resort on account of the mineral waters found in the locality.

The original temple to Vishnu in the form of Janardhana is said to have been built by the gods, *i.e.*, Nara Prajapatis to propitiate Vishnu. The temple was washed away by the sea and the present temple was built on the old sacred spot by a Pandyan ruler of Madura. The king was said to have been suffering from Brahmarakshas caused by killing of a Brahman. The king wandered about in search of a cure but found none. When the king came to Varkala, he found to his surprise he cast only one shadow, signifying that the ghost which had all along possessed him, had left him. The king was immediately convinced of the holiness of the spot and so set about building a magnificent temple in the place of the one washed away. The old idol was not to be found to be lodged in the new temple. This, too, was eventually revealed in a dream to the Pandyan king, who was told that on a particular day flowers would



VARKALA TEMPLE



be found floating on the sea at a particular spot, where at the bottom the original idol would be found. The idol, in pursuance of the dream, was taken out by a fisherman; its right arm, however, was found broken. The broken arm was attached to the idol with golden leaves and the ancient idol was consecrated in the temple. The Pandyan king greatly rejoiced, endowed the temple liberally, and entrusting the temple to the management of a body of trustees of whom Karuthedather Pazhur Nambudripad was the chief, returned to his kingdom. The trustees usurped the power to themselves and the management was taken over by the state in the reign of Murayamma Rani.

The legendary origin of the ancient shrine to Vishnu is as follows: Narada once went to the abode of Vishnu and after paying his respects to the latter, started for the abode of Brahma. Vishnu was so enraptured by the tunes of Vina which Narada was playing that he unconsciously followed Narada to Brahmaloaka. When Brahma

saw Narayana coming, he offered salutations to him and Vishnu, realising his delicate position, immediately disappeared. When Brahma got up, he found to his surprise that he was prostrating before Narada (who was his own son). The gods—Nara Prajapatis—who were present, laughed at Brahma's act. Brahma, becoming angry, cursed them saying that they should become human beings and go through miseries of birth and death. The Prajapatis were greatly grieved, at which Narada consoled them saying that they would be relieved if they did penance at a place to be chosen by him. So saying he threw his *valkala* (bark garment); it fell on a tree now identified with the spot in front of the Varkala temple. Hence the name of the city is a corruption of Valkala.

It is also believed that Brahma performed a big sacrifice here. The strata of lignite and the mineral waters found in the place, are attributed to this divine yaga. There is a mutt known as Sivagiri Mutt, two miles from the temple of Janardhana. It was founded by an ascetic and reformer

of recent date whose teachings have led to historic results. Guru Sri Narayana by name, he was born some 75 years ago, an Ezhava by caste. He began to preach a pure monistic creed and gathered a large number of followers. His doctrine was: "One Caste, One Religion, One God." The Sivagiri Mutt, wherein the saint-reformer passed his final days, was built in 1904. The present temple entry reform in Travancore may be said partially to be the result of that low-born saint's life and teachings.

Varkala is also noted for the tunnels bored in the mountains, one of them 2,364 feet long, to provide canal communication between North and South Travancore. One of them cost the Government 17 lakhs of rupees.

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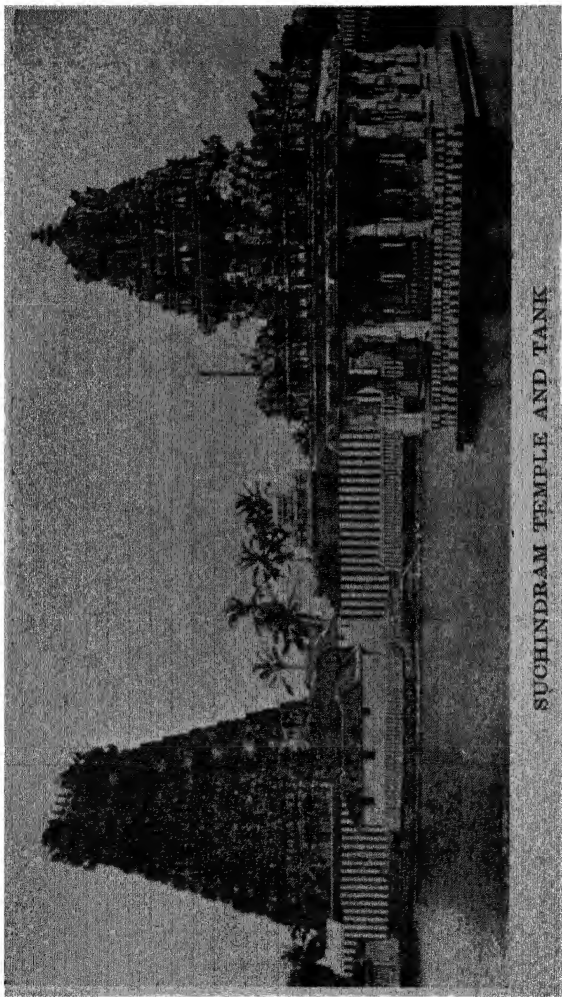
## Suchindram

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### THE WORSHIP OF THE TRINITY

**S**UCHINDRAM in Travancore State is one of the very few places where the Trinity—the combined Divinity of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu is worshipped. The town and temple are set in excellent scenery at the foot of the Ghats and offer great attraction to pilgrims. The temple is a big and majestic one, with a high seven-storied gopura (tower) and contains beautiful sculptures and paintings. There is a tank attached to the temple, a bath in which is considered to be very holy and purifying. The temple derives its sanctity and importance, not only from the fact that it is dedicated to the principal Gods of the Hindu Pantheon but also from an immemorial tradition that Indra himself, the king of gods, worshipped and still worships—every night—the Trimurti of this temple.

The country round about Suchindram was once a thick forest by name Gnanaranya. The well-known sage Atri lived



SUCHINDRAM TEMPLE AND TANK

here a life of asceticism and penance with his wife, Anasuya, the model of chastity, in a hut in the midst of the forest. One year the monsoon failed; the trees grew dry; the birds and animals of the forest began to famish and die. The great heart of the sage began to melt with pity for the dumb creatures. So he began a severe penance invoking Brahma. The latter appeared and said that he did not know the cause of the failure of the rains. The sage next invoked Vishnu and Siva and got the same reply. At last the sage resolved to invoke the Trimurti (all the three combined) who, being the highest, cannot but reveal the secret. They finally appeared and said that it was due to the absence of Indra, the Lord of Rains, who was in hiding in the Himalayas on account of a curse by sage Gautama.

Atri made up his mind to perform a great sacrifice in the Himalayas to bring down the rains and so took leave of his wife Anasuya. Anasuya, with great conjugal fidelity, washed the feet of her

lord with water and kept it, believing that the same would be her protection in her husband's absence and grant her whatever she wished. The sage smiled at her great love and departed for the Himalayas.

All the gods appeared in answer to the prayer of Atri in the sacrifice in the Himalayas except the Trimurtis. They did not appear as the success of the Yaga, they thought, would absolve Indra of his curse. They called in Sage Narada and consulted as to how they can frustrate Atri's yaga. Narada had his own schemes; above all a desire to prove to the world the power and greatness of chastity and to humble the pride of the divine wives of the three gods. So he set afoot a plan seemingly to frustrate Atri's yaga but eventually ending in the glorification of Anasuya.

He went and stood as a guest before the doors of Anasuya's hut. She came out and entertained him and his friends with lavish hospitality through the power of her husband's *padathirtha* she had with her. Narada, appraised of it, immediately returned to the Heavens, picking up on

the way a few gram-shaped iron pieces. He assembled the three goddesses and queried if they could fry those grams and, on their saying it was impossible, told them that there was one of their kind on earth who could do so. He immediately repaired to the Earth and had them fried by Anasuya and took them to the goddesses. Narada then insinuated to the goddesses that, so long as this Anasuya was there with her power of fidelity achieving the impossible, their own supremacy would be insecure and so advised them to set their husbands to tempt Anasuya. The three Gods, spurred on by their wives, appeared before Anasuya's hut clad as beggars; and when entreated by her to sit down to their meals, expressed a strange wish that they could not take their food except where their server was completely nude. Anasuya perplexed at first but suddenly remembering the husband's *padathirtha* and its miraculous power, sprinkled drops of it on the guests' heads. Lo! they were transformed into babies and Anasuya fed them as desired.



The metamorphosis that had come over the gods and their long absence had upset their consorts. Meanwhile Narada repaired to the Himalayas and informed Atri of his wife's owning three babies. The sage was suddenly perturbed, stopped his yaga and ran in haste to his hut to punish his erring wife. The sage, however, soon saw through the whole happening and found his wife as virtuous as before. The forlorn Devis of Heaven also turned up at the hut in search of their husbands. Atri and his wife blessed them, restored their husbands to them and the hoary sage saw in this denouement the fulfilment of his own yaga seeking the vision of the Trimurtis. Hence the worship of the Trimurtis in this place in which they appeared.

Devendra, it has been said already, had been cursed by Gautama and was hiding in the Himalayas. The story of Indra's lapse and the curse of Gautama is well known. Narada, immediately, with a view to save Indra, went and appraised the latter of the appearance of Trimurti at Gnanaranya and their

manifest power. Indra journeyed to the spot, performed a long penance and, having pleased the Trinity, was completely cured of his curse and shone forth with a thousand eyes.

It is said that Indra nightly visits the temple and performs the last puja to the Trinity in token of perpetual gratitude. This belief has left its impress on the arrangement for worship that is carried on in the temple. The same priest is not allowed to conduct service for two consecutive days. His turn comes only every alternate day. This is said to be intended to guard against the priest's noticing the changes in the position of utensils and garments etc. from the condition in which he left them the previous night. The poojaris are further put under solemn oath "not to divulge to the outer world whatever he might happen to hear or see inside the temple". The priests are recruited from the higher Nambudiri families of Malabar. This temple, on account of its power and sanctity, long remained a place where men were put to solemn oaths by dipping their hands

in boiling ghee. The custom was put an end to by His Highness Swami Thirunal Rama Varma (1829-1847).

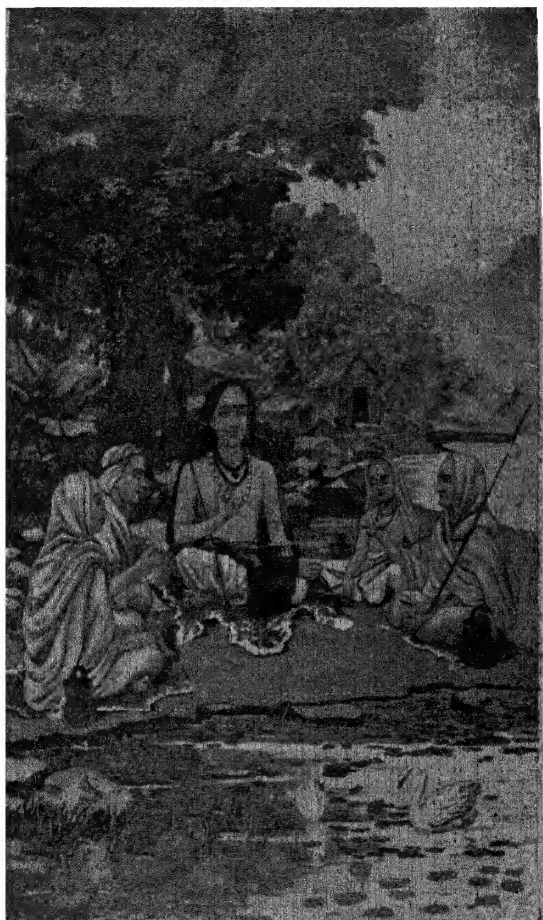
The above legends, which are the source of the temple's power and sanctity, are portrayed in a series of well-executed mural paintings in the inner chambers of the gopuram of the temple. A Malayalee guide takes the interested visitor through these galleries, which are not well-lighted and explains the entire story and sequence of the pictures with great piety and emotion. The paintings are said to be full of beauty and colour and as interesting as a movie.

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## Kaladi

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**K**ALADI is a small village in the Kunnatnad taluq of Kottayam Division situated at a distance of 6 miles from Alwaye Railway Station on the Cochin-Shoranur Line. It is famous as the birth-place of Sri Sankaracharya, the great Hindu Reformer and Vedantin. Sankara was a Nambudiri Brahmin belonging



ADI SANKARACHARYA

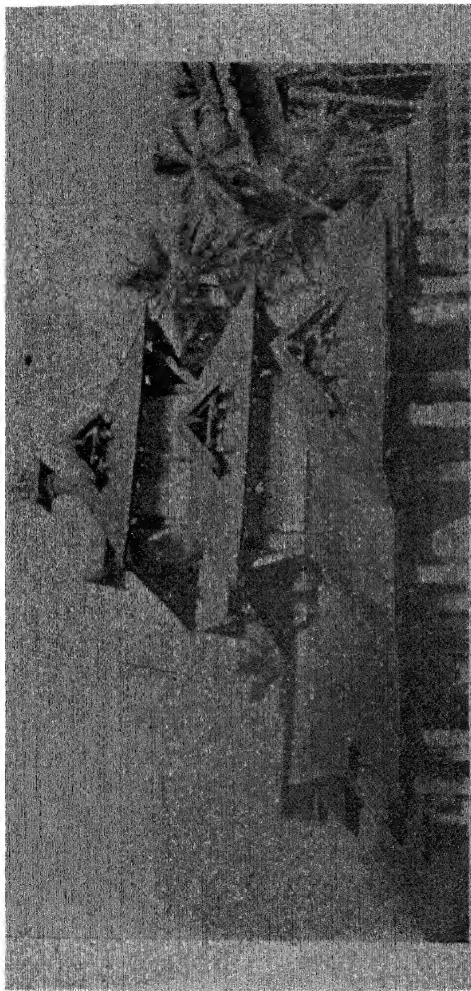
to the Kaipalli Illam. The Illam has now in its possession a plot of ground which his mother is said to have obtained in her lifetime and on which is now built a handsome monument marking the spot where her dead body was cremated.

The site of the Illam, which originally belonged to Cochin, was purchased by the Travancore Government in 1906 and presented to the Sringeri Mutt for the construction of a temple to Sri Sankara. Two temples, amidst idyllic surroundings on the banks of the river Alwaye, were subsequently built—one for the image of the Adi Sankaracharya and the other for the tutelary deity of the Mutt—Shree Saradamba. Two Patasalas are maintained here by the Sringeri Mutt, one for Vedic culture and the other for the Vedantic.

There is also a temple dedicated to Sri Krishna, the idol of which is believed to have been installed by the Adi Sankaracharya himself. The important festival connected with this place is called Sankara Jayanti, which begins on the 5th day after New Moon in Chitrai (April—May).

A place so sanctified is naturally the centre of great attraction to orthodox Hindus all over South India.

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THE MAHA VISHNU TEMPLE, THIRUVELLA

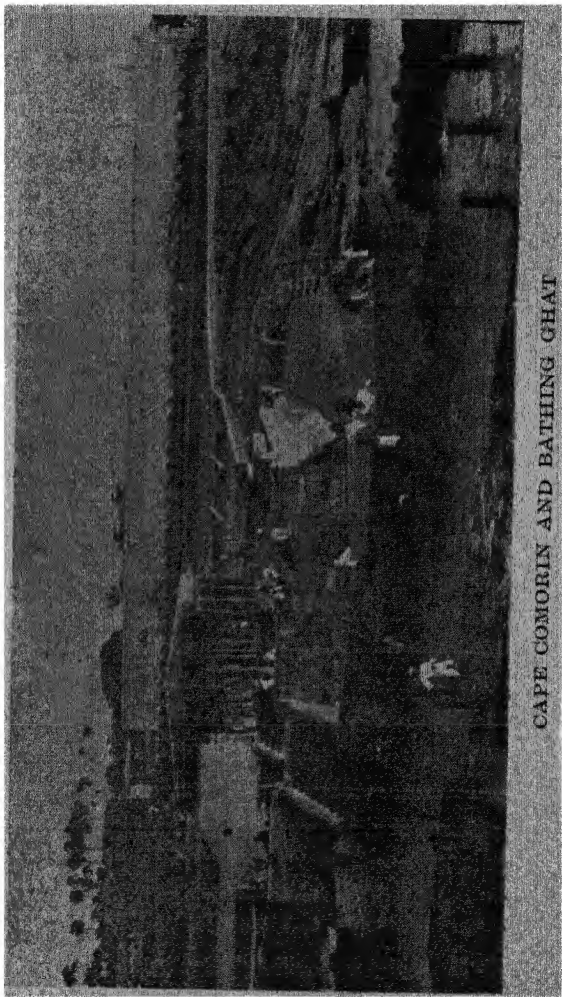
This ancient and unique temple is one of the most sacred temples in the Travancore State

## Cape Comorin

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### THE LAND'S END AND THE MEETING OF THE SEAS

ONE of the most majestic and entrancing places of pilgrimage in all India is Cape Comorin. It is the Land's End of India—a place where continent and ocean meet. Washed by the Ocean on three sides, with the magnificent ghats rising to view at the other—the place makes a lasting impression on every visitor and pilgrim, which Time cannot efface. It is celebrated for its shrine dedicated to the Goddess Uma and hence is known and revered throughout India. Poetic imagination has often woven beautiful picture of the goddess and her setting. The Indian Ocean with its two arms—the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal—is said to wash and worship the feet of the Goddess of India the Mother for ever.

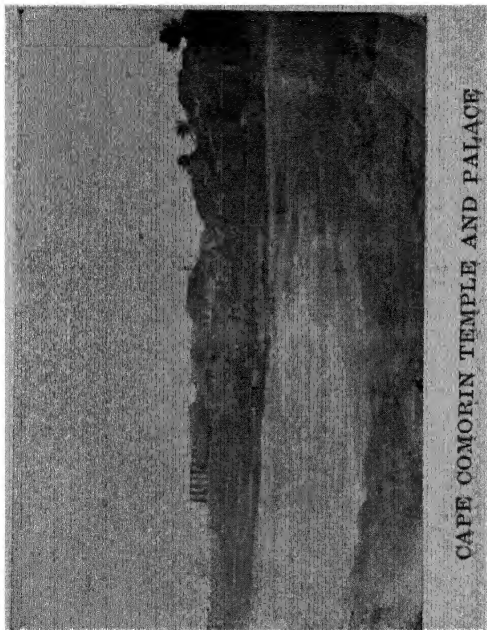


CAPE COMORIN AND BATHING GHAT



The story of the goddess worshipped at Cape Comorin is as follows: Once two demons, Baha and Mukha by name, gave immense trouble to the Devas. The latter went and complained to various gods but in vain and at last resorted to Siva—the One who resides at Benares as Visvanatha. He created two goddesses out of his inseparable Sakti—the one as Kali appeared at Kalighat and the other as Kanyakumari or Virgin Goddess appeared at Cape Comorin and completely annihilated the evil demons. This legend is celebrated in a war-like festival called Ambuchashi in the local temple in the second month of the Malayalam year.

A further local legend serves to enhance the prestige and power of the Virgin Goddess. It is said that the neighbouring shrine deity (Trimurti) of Suchindram fell in love with this Virgin Deity and was overwhelmed with the desire to wed her. He assembled all the gods of Heaven and told them his desire. The gods pondered and were filled with fear that, if the union were to be allowed, the virginity of the



CAPE COMORIN TEMPLE AND PALACE

Goddess, who had all along been their protection against the wicked Asuras may be impaired. They could not on the other hand say 'No' to the Trinity—the combined lords of the world. They, therefore, hesitated and were unable to give an answer and at last chose Narada to help them and frustrate the proposal if possible. Narada, approaching the Suchindram Trinity, asked him to prepare himself for the marriage. The Deity procured rare gifts and ornaments and started from Suchindram on the appointed day. The marriage was fixed to take place on an auspicious hour at midnight. The Suchindram deity sped with due ceremony so as not to miss the sacred hour. Narada assumed the form of a cock, falsely heralded the approach of dawn and discomfited the Deity. The Goddess, too, arrayed in all bridal beauty, awaited the arrival of the Lord and, finally disappointed, returned to her temple to remain a perpetual virgin. The story ends with a beautiful and poetic finale. The presents and ornaments brought by the Lord for the unfulfilled

marriage were turned into sea-shells and sands and these are those that lie about Kanya Kumari and her shrine. There are several holy ghats—said to be eleven in number—in and around Comorin wherein the pious pilgrim is enjoined to bathe.

The legendary connection of the Comorin Goddess with Kasi Visvanatha is an interesting one. It explains the rule that those who go on pilgrimage to Benares should also visit Cape Comorin to fulfil their pious object.

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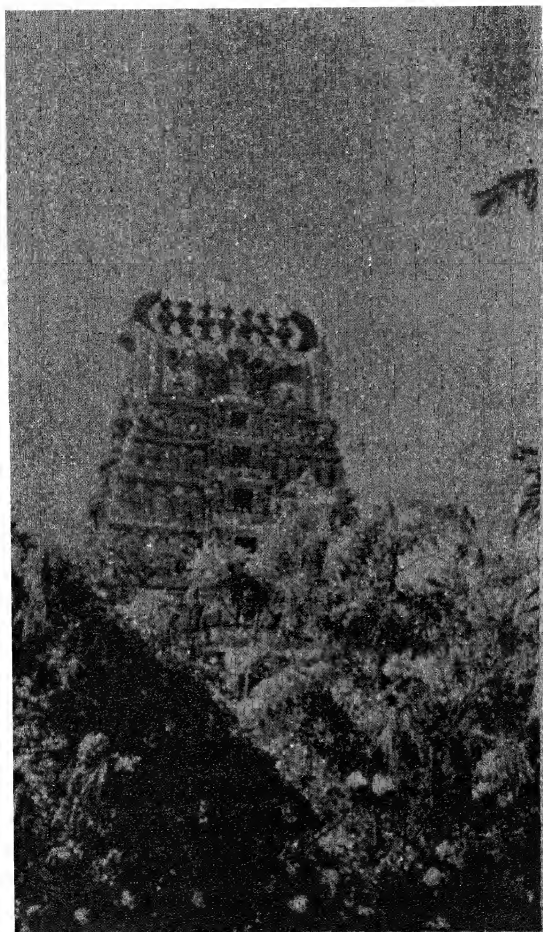
# MYSORE

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## Mysore City : Chamundi Hill

THE hill is named after Kali or *Chamundi*, the consort of Siva, who is worshipped here in a temple on the summit. The hill is situate 2 miles south-east of Mysore City. The hill is 3,489 feet above sea-level. Its commanding position enables one to get from its top an excellent view of the beautiful old city lying below.

The temple of Chamundeswari is a fine quadrangular structure with a big tower and can be seen for miles around. A flight of steps, said to have been built by Dodda Deva Raja, a king of the 17th century, leads to the top of the hill. About two-thirds of the way up the hill, there stands a colossal figure of Nandi (Siva's Bull) cut out of the solid rock. It is about 16 feet in height and is well-executed. The bull is represented in a couchant posture and is hung with trappings and chains of bells. Having regard



CHAMUNDI HILL, MYSORE

to its size and execution, it is one of the few large-sized and majestically sculptured bulls in South India.

The deity of the temple, Sri Chamundeswari, is the tutelary deity of the Mysore Royal Family. It has, therefore, been specially patronised by the members thereof. Dodda Deva Raja built the steps and had the Nandi carved. Krishna Raja Wodeyar III repaired the temple in 1827, presented it with a *Simha-vahana* and other vahanas used in processions. He also gave a gold jewel called Nakshatramalike with 30 Sanskrit verses inscribed on it. There are also statues of the said king and his queens in a shrine near-by.

The Chamundi temple has a unique history behind it. When the Mahomedan kings, Haidar Ali and his son Tippu, usurped the throne of Mysore, they, too, instead of razing the temple to the ground as other zealous Mahomedan kings did, showed reverence to it. Haidar Ali followed the usual custom of the Hindu Kings of Mysore and every year sent to the Goddess rich gifts of jewels, vessels of gold and silver and clothes. His son

Tippu followed his father's example. The presents made by these two kings with their inscriptions are still preserved and used by the priests of the temple in the worship of the deity. It may be mentioned that certain other temples in Mysore also received gifts like the Ranganatha Temple at Seringapatam, Tippu's capital. When the city was besieged by the English, Tippu Sultan sent gifts to its Brahmins asking them to pray in his name for the safety of his capital.

There is an older temple on the Chamundi Hill, Marbbala or Mahabaleswara, which was endowed by the Hoysala King, Vishnuvardhana in 1128 and by the descendant of the Vijayanagar kings ruling at Chandragiri in 1620. This temple stands to the south of the Chamundeswari temple. There is a small village on the hill consisting of 100 houses. The road up the hill is lighted by electric lights. There is a residence of His Highness the Maharajah at the top of the hill.

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## Seringapatam

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FOR more than ten centuries the temple at the western end of the Island in the Cauvery—dedicated to Sri Ranganatha—has been celebrated as one of the chief shrines of the Vaishnavas. The core of the temple was built by one Tirumalaya in 894 when the rest of the Island was no more than a mere jungle. Since the advent of Ramanuja to the Island, it became a centre of pilgrimage for all devotees.

In 1454, it was enlarged greatly under the influence of Tirumanna, lord of Nagamangala, when he became the Viceroy of Seringapatam under the Rayas of Vijayanagara. It is said the materials for the shrine were obtained by the demolition of 101 Jain temples nearly and the temple prospered on the discovery of enormous hidden treasures.

The temple of Seringapatam has played a conspicuous part in the history of the present ruling dynasty of Mysore. About 1574, we are told, that Chama Raja Wodeyar IV was performing puja in the

temple when "the imbecile Viceroy attempted to seize him". Warned of the danger, the Raja escaped and continued to defy his rival.

Early in the 17th century (1610) on the death of the Vijayanagar Viceroy of Seringapatam, the city fell into the hands of Raja Wodeyar of Mysore.

Another century elapsed and a chronicler says that in 1761 the young Immadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar, his Rani and the Brahmin minister Khande Rao "united in an oath of mutual fidelity at the foot of the idol of the great temple against the usurper Haider Ali". Haider was, however, too strong for him and took a terrible revenge. In 1773, the temple was injured by an explosion; but Haider himself restored it soon after.

Tippu is said to have razed almost all Hindu temples nearly yet spared the temple of Sri Ranganatha, and its gopuram still stands as it stood in the grim days of Tippu's iconoclastic adventures.

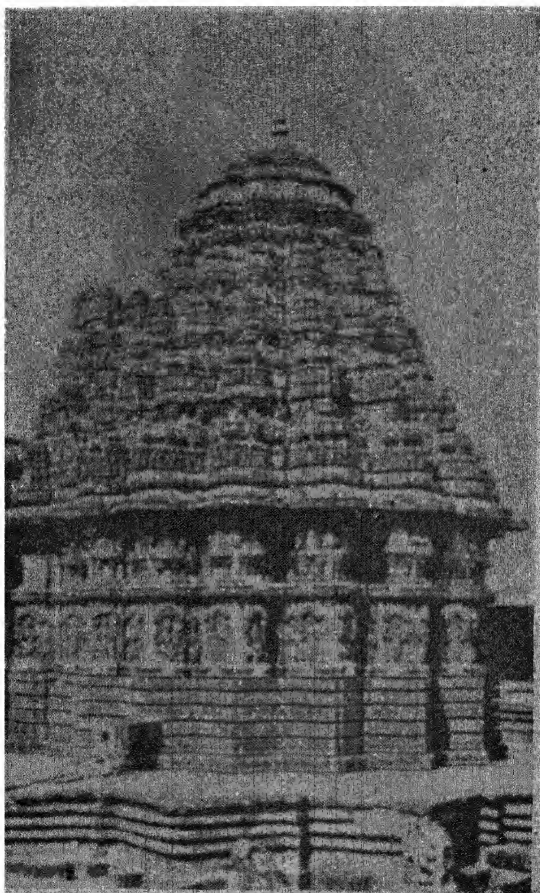
Thousands of pilgrims flock to this sacred shrine during the car festival in January and the Brindavanotsava feast in October.

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## Somnathapur

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**S**OMNATHAPUR on the left bank of the Kaveri, five miles north of Sosile in the Mysore State, is noted for the temple of Vishnu under the name of Prasanna Chenna Kesava. The temple is attributed to the famous Jakanachari, the sculptor and architect of the Hoysala kings of Mysore and of the Belur temple. The temple was constructed in 1269 under the orders of Soma, a member of the royal family and a high officer under king Narasimha III. The city around the temple was also founded by him and named after him. This temple comes on the top of the great Vaishnava movement in Mysore started by Sri Ramanuja a century and a half before and is considered to be the most perfect artistic specimen of the numerous temples to Vishnu, which came to be erected all over Mysore under its influence. Its sculptures, according to Fergusson,



THE TEMPLE AT SOMNATHAPUR

are more perfect than those of the temples at Belur and Halbeid.

The Somnathapur temple, like other Hoyasala temples, is a three-chambered one (Arikutachala) the chief cell being occupied by the image of Kesava, those on the north and south having the images of Janardana and Gopala respectively. The original image of Kesava is unfortunately not in existence; its place being occupied by an ordinary image of modern times. There is no doubt that the central image of Kesava originally installed should have been a marvel of the sculptor's art if we are to judge from the images of Janardana and Gopala which are both beautifully carved and from an image of Kesava found sculptured in a semi-circular panel in the entrance porch to the temple. The three cells are surmounted by three elegantly carved towers identical in design. In front of the three cells, there is the Navaranga or the middle hall and in front of it the Mukhamantapa or the front hall. On the lintel of one of the doorways there is a figure of Lakshmi-Narayana above and one of Venugopala below.

On both sides of the entrance around the front hall runs a railed parapet (jagati) consisting of sculptured friezes, as in other Hoysala temples, containing elephants, horsemen, scrollwork and so forth. The fourth frieze from the bottom contains, in the portion running round the south cell, scenes from the Ramayana, in that round the west cell, scenes from the Bhagavatha Purana and in that round the north cell, scenes from the Mahabharata. There are a number of large images on the outer wall of the temple, the majority of which represent Vishnu in his various forms—Narasimha, Varaha, Hayagriva, etc. and the rest representing other gods of the Hindu Pantheon: Brahma, Siva, Ganapathi, Indra, Manmatha, Surya, Lakshmi, Mahishasura Mardhani, etc.

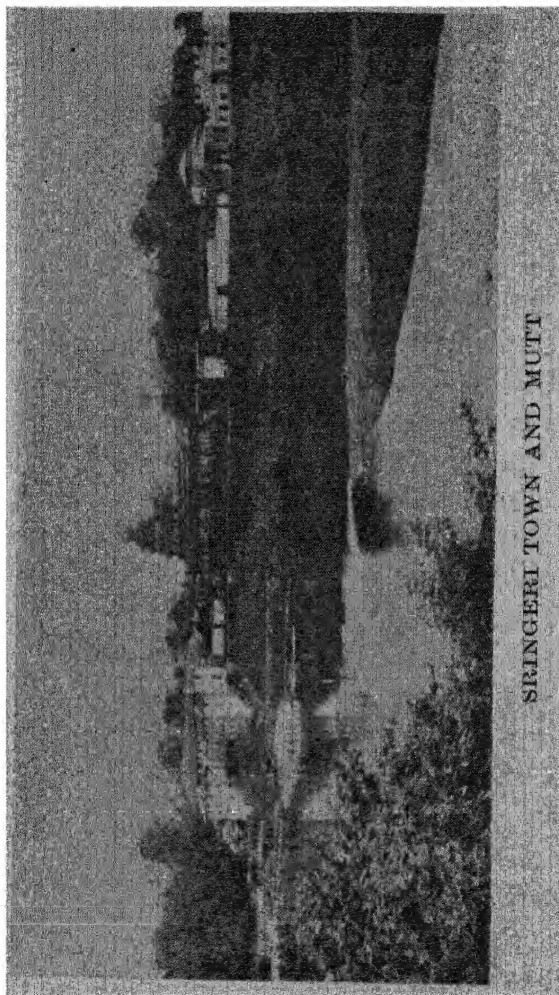
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## Sringeri

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**S** RINGERI, the religious seat founded by Sri Sankaracharya himself and which may be said to have ever since been presided over by his direct line of successors, is one of the most important places in Hindu India. The town is situated on a spur of the Western Ghats within the dominions of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore. It is some 52 miles by road from Shimoga, a railway station on the Mysore State Railways. The road lies through magnificent mountains and forest scenery. All around Sringeri are mountain forests abounding in sandal-wood and areca nut trees. The Matadhipathis, the successors of Sankaracharya, own this town, which is part of a small fief granted to them by the kings of the past and is administered by them.

A brief reference to the life of the great philosopher, Sankaracharya, is necessary to trace the history of Sringeri, its mutt and



SRINGERI TOWN AND MUTT



the temple of Sarada (Goddess of Learning) and its subsequent importance. He was born in a village, Kaladi, situate in Travancore. He was a precocious youth and is said to have very early mastered all the sacred books. He then sought the permission of his mother to become a *sanyasin* and migrated to Benares, there to propagate his Advaita philosophy and compose the celebrated commentaries. Soon a large number of disciples gathered around him and with their help he composed his works. A local king also patronised him and loaded him with honours.

He then left Benares surrounded by his numerous disciples to proclaim his philosophy and to put down the heretical cults of Buddhism and others that were still flourishing in several parts of India. The most famous man at this time, who before Sankara had established the superiority and authoritative character of Vedas and the Mimamsa, was one Kumarila Bhatta, an Assamese Brahmin, who flourished in the court of a king called Sudhanvan. Sankara, we are told, met him just on the eve of his voluntarily

courting death in pursuance of a vow and so could not discourse with him or acquaint himself with his learning. But the dying Kumarila directed Sankara to another Mandana Misra, his own sister's husband, who was living at Mahishmati, on the Narmada.

Mandana Misra too, like Kumarila Bhatta, was a great upholder of the Purva Mimamsa and the Karma Marga. Sankara invited him to a controversy. Both were eminent in their own learning. Who was to be the umpire? It happened that Bharati, the wife of Mandana Misra, was a lady of vast accomplishments and learning; and Sankara cheerfully consented to her being the umpire. Tradition says that Misra was Brahma incarnate and Bharati, Saraswati incarnate. Sankara defeated Mandana. Then the learned umpire challenged Sankara to controversy with herself; she too, Saraswati though she was, was beaten. The two followed Sankara to the south where he had already planned in his mind to establish a great centre of Vedantic learning. There could be no greater or more valuable acquisitions.

to such a seat of learning than Mandana and his wife.

The spot, according to the legendary version, was decided by a miraculous incident. Sankara was going from place to place, till at last, one hot noon, he reached the place where now Sringeri stands. He proceeded to the River Tunga nearby for his bath and there saw a frog in labour on a piece of rock under the scorching heat. He also saw, strangely enough, a cobra, natural enemy of the frog, covering the frog with its outspread hood. This miraculous sight which showed that Nature itself was resigned and at peace, determined Sankara to choose the place as the seat of his monastery and Vedic university. Mandana Misra became the chief of his followers and later became his successor in the spiritual office under the name of Sureswara Acharya.

A greater honour was done—and an enduring memorial was erected—to his spouse, the gifted Bharati, who had now abjured all, like her husband, and followed Sankara in the garb of an ascetic. A temple was erected,—which still exists and

is the 'special object of worship by Sankara's successors,—and her image made to adorn the *peeta* or pedestal as the presiding Deity. A Sri Chakra also was duly consecrated. Originally an image made of sandalwood represented Sarada but later on in the days of Vidyaranya, who became the adviser of the first rulers of Vijayanagar, it was replaced by a golden image of Sarada, which still exists. A biographer of Sankaracharya says: "There cannot be much doubt that Sankara's revival of Vedantic Hinduism in India is largely indebted to this famous and venerable lady, although we cannot now measure accurately the value of her contribution to the cause of progressive Hinduism in those days. . . . It is enough for us to know that Sankara considered her to be worthy of worship and reverential commemoration." There is a tower called the Sri Chakra tower built by Vidyaranya over the tomb of his guru. It is a very fine piece of architecture. It is built by laying one piece of granite over another without any cementing substance. There is a pillared

hall in front, with 12 pillars, dedicated to the 12 signs of the Zodiac. It is said that every month, as the sun moves, he shines against the pillar bearing the month's name.

The name of the place Sringeri is derived from an old legend connected with the epic story of Ramayana. It was originally the mountain or giri of Rishya Sringa—the one-horned saint. Once a terrible famine raged in Ayodhya. King Dasaratha, who was much disconsolate at the sad plight of his subjects, cast about for a means to bring about the rains. He was told that, if Rishya Sringa could be persuaded to visit his kingdom, rains would fall in plenty. So Dasaratha sent for the sage and on his appearance the wished-for rains fell. There is a tomb to Rishya Sringa over which an emblem of Siva has been installed, three miles to the north of Sringeri. It is said that even now when the monsoon fails, people on the West Coast proceed to this shrine and worship the Saint.

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## Melukote

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It is a town sacred to the Vaishnavas, situated in the Seringapatam Taluk, Mysore District, in the State of Mysore. The place derives its importance from the fact that Sri Ramanuja, the great Vaishnavite reformer, when he fled to Mysore from persecution by the Chola king, took up his residence and lived there for fourteen years. The town itself together with its temple, sacred tank and community may be said to have sprung from that event. A brief description of Ramanuja's arrival and work will explain the origin of the town and temple and their importance.

When Ramanuja was almost past his middle age and had completed his famous 'Bhashya' and was peacefully pursuing his ministry at Srirangam, there came into the Chola throne a bigoted Saivite, Kulottunga by name. He issued a fiat requiring Ramanuja and his followers to subscribe

to their faith in Siva. On their refusing to do so, the king ordered them to be brought to his court. Ramanuja, fearing for his personal safety, fled along the upper course of the Kaveri and by the Western Ghats to Shaligrama and finally to Melukote; his disciple, Kuresa, donned his ascetic robes and personated him at the Chola court; and he and another had their eyes plucked out. Ramanuja's hour of arrival in Mysore was a propitious one. The king of the country at this time, the Hoysala Bittideva Raya, had a queen greatly attached to the worship of Vishnu. Their daughter, who was said to be possessed, was causing them a good deal of misery on that account. The king at first turned to the priests and expounders of Jainism, to which religion he belonged, to cure his daughter but their help proved of no avail. At last it was suggested to him that the pious monk from Srirangam, Ramanuja, may be called in. He did so and the princess was cured of the evil spirit. In gratitude to Ramanuja, the king immediately abjured his Jaina religion and became an

ardent Vaishnava and his name also was changed by Ramanuja to that of Vishnuvardhana, the name by which he is known to history. Ever after, Vishnuvardhana showered honours on Ramanuja and built various temples to Vishnu and richly endowed them.

Ramanuja, during the early years of his stay, ran short of the white clay which is used by Vaishnavas for marking their foreheads. He, it is said, had a dream in which Narayana appeared and said that his image was lying in a part of the jungle near Melukote and that in a spot near-by was to be found a deposit of white clay which he wanted. Ramanuja at once awoke and, informing the king of his auspicious dream and gathering a number of people to clear the jungle and recover the image, started for the hills near by. After a long, but successful search, a beautiful image of Narayana was discovered and also the deposit of white clay. The king's joy knew no bounds at this further mark of Ramanuja's holiness, and immediately a temple was built to house the newly discovered image of Vishnu.



The image was duly consecrated and worshipped. An *utsava vigraha* (the one that is taken out in procession) was, however, wanting. A well-known legend states that Ramanuja was informed that a beautiful bronze image of God had once existed but that the same had been taken away in the course of plunder by a Turushka king of Delhi. Legend adds that Ramanuja travelled to Delhi, found that the image was being used by the daughter of the king for play, and interceding with the king, got it from him and brought it to the Melukote temple. The image is called Chella Pillai a word meaning "a Darling" in memory of the anecdote that when Ramanuja saw the beautiful image in the hands of the princess, he addressed it endearingly and the image immediately flew to his hands. It is said that this Delhi princess, unable to part with her beloved image, accompanied it to the south; and there is a temple built at the foot of the hill at Melukote to her memory still surviving. The temple to Chellapillai (Sampathkumara) Raya is a square building of great dimensions but very plain.

There is another striking temple in Melukote, placed on the summit of the rock dedicated to Narasimha. This temple has been richly endowed, having been under the special patronage of the Mysore Ruler and has a most valuable collection of jewels. The first Mysore king, Raja Wodeyar (1578-1617 A.D.) is said to have been a great devotee of this Deity and a constant visitor to the temple. A golden crown set with jewels was presented by him to the God. It is known as Rajamudi and is even now used in one of the festivals at the temple. From the inscriptions on the gold jewels and gold and silver vessels of the temple, we learn that there were presents even from the Mahomedan ruler Tippu Sultan to this Deity. The Vairamudi festival, which is the chief annual celebration, is attended by about 10,000 pilgrims.

There is a Vaishnava Mutt at Melukote said to be as old as the days of Ramanuja. The Matadhipathi is called Parakalaswami. The Yathirajaswami Mutt has a big private library containing a large number of Sanskrit and Tamil works on Visishtadvaita Philosophy, Logic,

Astronomy, Rhetoric, Dharmasastra and other subjects.

A most interesting feature of the temple is the fact that, under the order of Sri Ramanuja, the Panchamas of the locality were allowed freely to enter the temple and bathe in its sacred tank for certain days in the year—a custom which is still in force. The Panchamas are said to have been of great help to Ramanuja in discovering the image of Vishnu.

The white clay or mica of Melukote, which also, according to tradition, was discovered by Ramanuja, has a great reputation and is transported to distant places for use by the Vaishnavas.

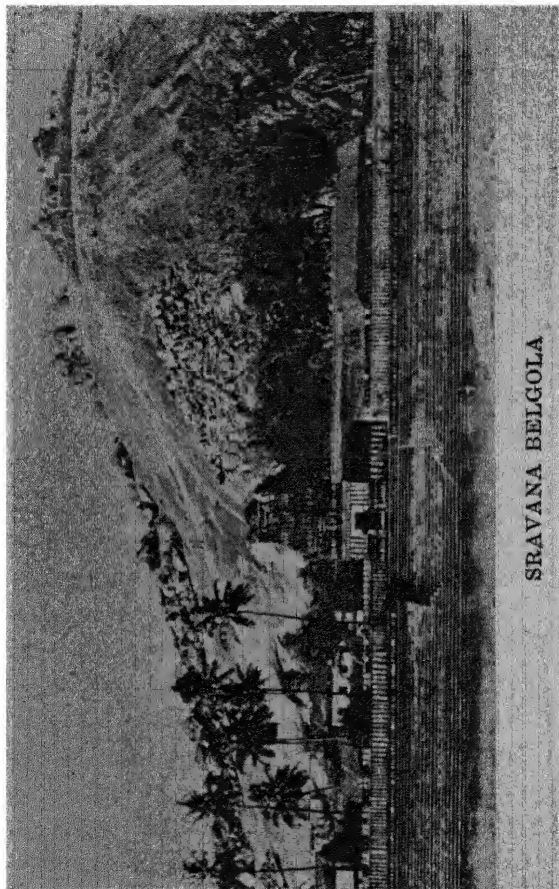
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## Sravana Belgola

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**S**RAVANA BELGOLA is a place of considerable importance and a noted place of pilgrimage to the Jainas of both South and North India. It is situated about eight miles to the south of Chennarayapatna in the Chennarayapatna taluk in the Hassan district of the Mysore State. The place can be reached by motor also from Arsikere or the French Rocks Railway Station.

The town lies in a picturesque valley between two rocky hills, one larger than the other, which rise boldly from the surrounding plains and are covered with huge boulders. "In the whole beautiful State of Mysore," wrote an Englishman, "it would be hard to find a spot where the historic and the picturesque clasp hands so firmly as here." The larger hill called Vindhyagiri is 3,347 feet above the sea-level. It has on it the famous colossal image of Gommateswara and a few Jaina temples (bastis). A flight of about 500 steps, cut in the granite rock, leads up to the summit of the hill.



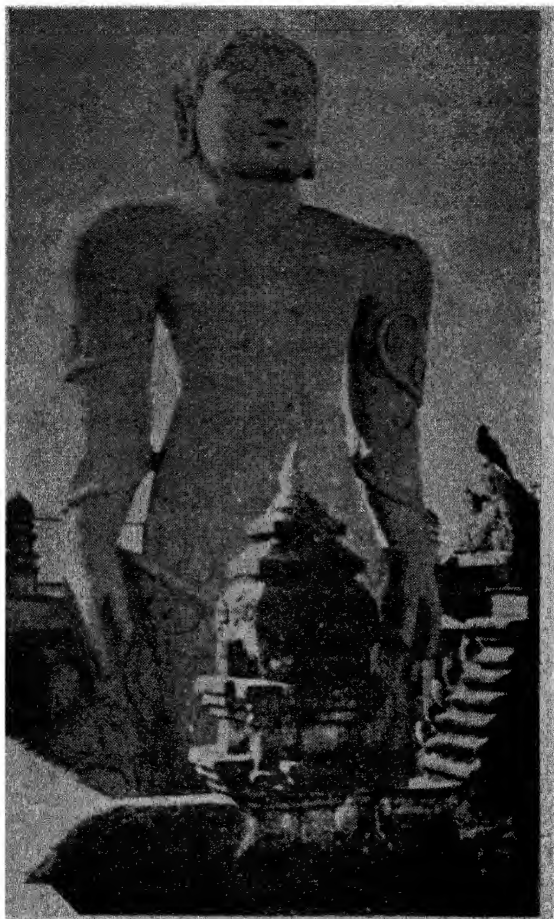
SRAVANA BELGOLA

upon which stands an open court surrounded by a long corridor. The corridor contains cells enshrining Jaina and other sacred images. The corridor is again surrounded by a heavy wall picturesquely built out of boulders found in the rock in natural position. In the centre of this court stands the colossal image of Gommateswara, sacred to the Jainas.

The smaller hill is known as Chandragiri and is 3,052 feet above sea-level. It has a group of temples (bastis) dedicated to the various Saints or Gods of the Jainas, the Santinatha, Parswanatha, Neminatha, etc. Kattale Basti, said to have been built by the Hoysala king, Vishnu Vardhana, before his conversion to Vaishnavism, is the largest temple on the hill. It contains a fine seated image of the Jain Saint Adinatha. The Chamundaraya Basti, built by Chamundaraya, the minister of the Ganga rulers as the name implies, is the finest temple both in style and decoration. It has an upper storey and a fine tower. On the ground-floor there is the figure of Neminatha and on the upper one that of Parswanatha.

Let us now return to the large hill and the Gomateswara image, which are very famous and have made the place a centre of all-India pilgrimage. The image of Gomateswara is a nude one as all Jain images are and stands erect facing the North. The image is a remarkable one. It is roughly 58 feet in height. "It is probable," says a writer, "that Gommata was cut out of a boulder which rested on the spot, as it would have been a work of great difficulty to transport a granite mass of this size up the oval hill-side. It is larger than any of the statues of Rameses in Egypt. The figure is standing with shoulders squared and arms hanging straight. Its upper half projects above the surrounding ramparts. It is carved in a finely-grained light grey granite, has not been injured by weather or violence, and looks as bright and clean as if just carved from the chisel of the artist.

The face is its strong point. Considering the size of the head, which, from the crown to the bottom of the ear, measures six feet six inches. The artist was skilful indeed to draw from the blank rock the



STATUE OF GOMATESWARA



wondrous contemplative expression touched with a faint smile, with which Gommata gazes out on the struggling world.

Gommateswara has watched over India for only a thousand years whilst the statues of Rameses have gazed upon the Nile for more than 4,000 years. The monolithic Indian saint is thousands of years younger . . . . but he is more impressive both on account of his commanding position on the brow of the hill overlooking the wide stretch of the plains and of his size.

The image was ordered to be sculptured and consecrated by an ardent Jaina Chamunda Raya, minister of the Ganga kings Narasimha II and Rajamalla II in or about the year 978 A.D. The story of the saint Gomateswara, as found in the Jaina chronicles, is to the effect that he was the son of Purudeva or the first Thirthankara and the brother of Bharata. The brothers quarrelled over the possession of the kingdom and the elder, Bahuvali (Gomateswara) though victorious, handed over his kingdom to his defeated elder brother and retired from the world to pursue the life of an ascetic. He thus.

became a Kevali and attained great eminence in wisdom and penance.

The chief festival or ceremony in this place is the one known as Mastakabisheka or the Head-anointing Ceremony of Gomateswara. It is performed at certain conjunctions of the heavenly bodies at intervals of several years and at an immense cost. It is considered very sacred and it attracts Jain pilgrims by thousands from all over India. The anointment performed in 1887 was a very grand one having been sponsored by the Kolhapur Swami. Particulars of it are available. In anticipation of the great day, 20,000 pilgrims from all parts of India, Bengali, Gujarati and Tamil, had gathered there. For a whole month there was daily worship in all the temples and padapuja or worship of the feet of the great idol. On the great day people began to ascend the hill even before dawn to secure good places from which to view the God and the anointing ceremony. Opposite the image, an area of 40 square feet was filled with bright yellow corn, on which were placed 1,000

gaily painted earthen jars, filled with sacred water and covered with cocoanuts and mango leaves. Around the image, scaffolding was put up wherein were posted several Jain priests each having near-by pots filled with ghee, milk, etc. There were preliminary baths to the image and the final anointing was done with 15 different substances: water, milk, jaggery, plantains, ghee, almonds, dates, poppy seeds, curds, gold and silver, flowers, coins and sandal. There was also performed a similar ceremony under the personal auspices of H. H. the Maharaja of Mysore.

The place has also some historic importance and is connected in tradition with one of the mightiest emperors of ancient India. There was a Jain saint by name Bhadrabahu in Northern India. He foresaw a big famine in Northern India which would last for 12 years and so, when the period arrived, he led 12,000 Jains to South India in search of more favoured lands. The Maurya Emperor, Chandragupta, who was a Jain and an ardent disciple of Bhadrabahu, the foremost teacher of the day, abdicated the throne and taking

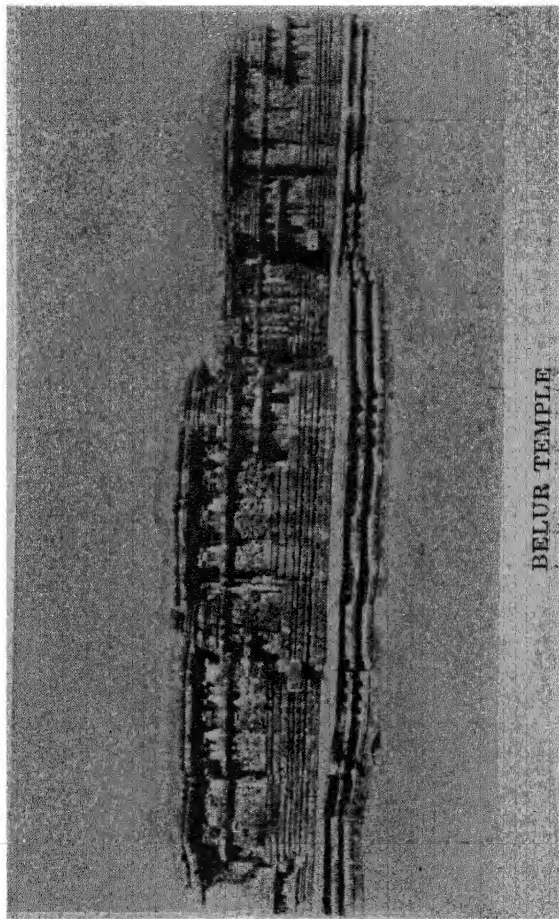
dikshe, joined him at Sravana Belgola hills where the former had settled. Bhadrabahu died, Chandragupta survived him for 12 years and then, in the Jain fashion, starved himself to death. Eminent historians have found a substratum of truth in these traditional accounts. Vincent A. Smith in his *History of India*, pp. 75, 76, opines that "the only direct evidence throwing light on the manner in which the eventful reign of Chandragupta Maurya came to an end is that of Jain tradition". The migration of Bhadrabahu is the origin of the schism between Svetambaras and Digambaras, the followers of Bhadrabahu being known as the Digambaras.

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## Belur

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**B**ELUR is a town in the Hassan District of the Mysore State, situated 24 miles to the north-west of Hassan. It originally bore the name of Velapura or Velur. It is one of the noted Vaishnava places of pilgrimage in Mysore, dating from the time of Ramanuja's sojourn in Mysore and his conversion of the Hoysala king, Vishnuvardhana. That king whose original name was Bittal Deva and who was a Jaina, was converted to Vaishnavism by Sri Ramanuja when he stayed in Mysore after fleeing from persecution by the Chola king Kulottunga. In gratitude to Ramanuja and in commemoration of Vishnu whom he began to worship with very ardent zeal, he built numerous temples in various parts of his dominions, those of Belur and Halebid being the most famous for their sculptural and architectural beauty. The temple at Belur was consecrated, after Ramanuja's return



BELUR TEMPLE

to Srirangam, by his nephew Dasaratha, who had been specially sent by the former at the king's request. The town, apart from its Vaishnavite importance, was a favourite resort of the Hoysala kings. An inscription tells us that king Ballala I. married the three beautiful and accomplished daughters of Mariyane Dandanayaka in one pavilion here and "as wage for their wet nursing" granted the lordship of Sindagere to their father.

The celebrated Temple of this town is the one dedicated to Chenna Kesava, erected and endowed by Vishnuvardhana. It was built by the same master-sculptor and craftsman, Jakanachari, who built the temples of Halebid. This is probably his last work and shows his genius in fullness and perfection.

The Chenna Kesava Temple stands on a raised terrace in the middle of a spacious court-yard, surrounded by temples and mantapas, some of which are later additions with a big gopura in the Dravidian style at the entrance. It has three doorways on the east, south and north, the latter two being known as "Friday

entrance" and the first "Heavenly entrance". The jambs of the east doorway contain sculptures of rare divinities: Rati and Manmatha, Hanuman and Garuda. The most famous feature of this temple, as that of Halebid, is the parapet (or jagati) containing several rows of finely executed sculptures. It begins at either side of the east doorway and extends beyond the north and south doorways. The series of sculptures is eight in number, comprising elephants, cornice with lion's heads, scroll work with figures, cornice with bead work, small female figures, creepers and delicately carved female figures again. Above this come the perforated screens, many of which bear sculptures, two of them representing the Durbar of a Hoysala king. The pillars interposing between the screens have beautifully carved figures in them. They are some 40 in number and are called Madanakai figures in Canarese. Only a few of them represent Goddesses, the majority of them represent women in varied poses and action and a number of beautiful scenes from Nature—a



lizard pouncing on a fly, a woman stripping herself on finding a scorpion in her cloth and the like. Inside the temple also are to be found exquisitely carved figures of Vishnu, beautiful figures of women and delicately chiselled pillars and scroll work. The Kesava image installed in the temple is said to be a magnificent piece of sculpture. The original name of the deity seems to have been Viranarayana as the inscriptions show.

There are some lesser temples by the side of Chenna Kesava temple—Kappe Chennigaraya temple to the south-west and to its west the Viranarayana temple, and to its north-west the temple of the Goddess Andal. The former temple has two cells opening opposite to each other. The chief one containing the image of Kappe Chennigaraya faces east, the other containing Venugopala faces north. As in the main temple, there are various figures of Vishnu and Madanakai figures. The Andal temple has rows of elephants, scroll-work and Puranic scenes. There is a temple to the Alvars (the Vaishnava Tamil poets) in the basement of which is a continuous frieze

representing scenes from the Ramayana. Some time back there was discovered opposite the Kappe Chennigaraya temple a stone slab containing a male and a female figure standing side by side with folded hands under an ornamental canopy. The rich dress and ornaments appeared to indicate royal rank. The male figure wears a cone-shaped cap, partly covering the ears and a robe extending down to the feet. According to Mr. Narasimachariar, they are the figures of Vishnuvardhana and his queen Santala, the royal converts, who built the above temples.

An English traveller, Mrs. Bowring, has left a description of the fine town of Belur and its natural setting. She says: "I shall never forget the view on entering Belur. It was most lovely. Green rice-crops sloping down to the edge of the tank, a fine sheet of blue water surrounded by large trees, above which appeared the grey walls of the fortress and the white dome and towers of the famous temple; beyond the Bababudan mountains looking purple and blue. . . . It was altogether as beautiful a sight as anything I have ever seen."

There is an annual festival held in the Chenna Kesava temple in the month of April. It lasts for five days and is attended by roughly about 5,000 people. The Panchamas are allowed to enter the temple for certain days in the year under an order of Sri Ramanuja. There is no Goddess in the Chenna Kesava temple but one was probably in subsequent periods carried to the hills adjacent to the town, to which the Chenna Kesava is occasionally taken to meet the Goddess. The deity on these occasions is said to use a pair of sandals which are kept in the temple. The chucklers of the locality, who prepare them, are allowed to enter the court-yard of the temple in consequence of it.

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## Nanjangud

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**N**ANJANGUD, 12 miles south of Mysore, and a station on the Mysore State Railways, is noted for its temple to Siva known here as Nanjundesvara or Sri-kantesvara. It is a very celebrated Siva temple in Mysore and has been vastly patronised by her kings.

A small temple seems to have existed in ancient times, but the same was enlarged by Karachuri Nandi Raja and subsequently by Dewan Purniah. The present temple is a large one with a gopura, all built in Dravidian style. There is a verandah in front of the temple supported by eight huge well-carved black stone pillars. There is a *navaranga* with cells to the right and left containing lingams set up by the kings and queens of Mysore. There are statues of Krishna Raja Wodeyar III and his four queens in worshipping attitude. In the *prakara* of the temple there are shrines all

round containing images of the 63 Saiva "devotees" or saints of South India and various representatives of Siva. In the temple itself there are finely chiselled figures of Parvati and Subrahmanya as Dandayudhapani. The most important festival of the temple is a car festival, which lasts for 3 days and attracts innumerable pilgrims. The temple is a very important one in the entire State of Mysore and receives an annual allowance of more than 20,000 rupees from the Government.

An adjoining place where the stream called Churnavati runs into the Ganudenya river, is held sacred to the Rishi Parasu Rama and contains a temple to him. This temple is sacred to Lingayats also. The object of worship is an inscribed slab measuring 3 inches by 2 inches.

There is also a Madhwa Mutt of great celebrity known as Raghavandra-sawmi Mutt. It was founded as early as the 15th century and has had an unbroken line of gurus up to the present day. Many of the occupants of this Mutt seem to have been noted writers on the Dualistic

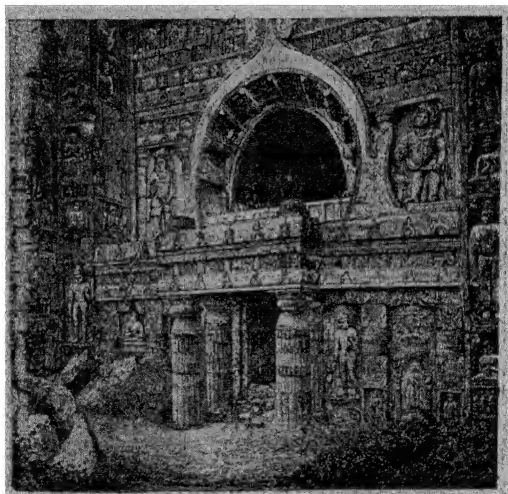
Philosophy. A grant preserved in the Mutt, dated 1580, contains the very interesting information that Vijayindra (the Madhwa guru), Appaya Dikshita (of Tanjore) and Tatacharya (the celebrated Vaishnava teacher of Conjeevaram) used to meet together at the court of the Nayak ruler, Sevappa of Tanjore, and debate the merits of their respective systems of Philosophy.

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# HYDERABAD (DECCAN)

## Ajanta

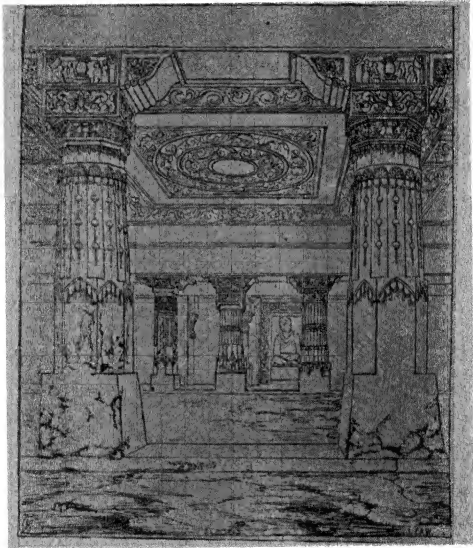
THE caves and rock-cut shrines of Ajanta (in the Nizam's Dominions) with their world-known paintings are the most celebrated and ancient monuments of Buddhistic art and piety in India.



CAVE AT AJANTA: VIEW OF FACADE

The caves extend to a length of one-third of a mile along the face of a steep rock

are situated at about a height of 50 to 100 feet from the valley below. The earlier of the caves may be assigned to the 2nd century B.C. while the latest Cave No. 26 belongs to the 7th century A.D.



CAVE AT AJANTA: VIEW OF INTERIOR

These caves were intended as places of worship and as resorts of monks and students. Each of the caves contains a hall with a dagobha or figure of Buddha



whereto worship was offered, with a number of cells or rooms cut out in the sides.

The sculptures in these caves—especially the later ones which were more elaborately worked than the earlier ones—are all monumental specimens of Buddhistic art and piety. The figures of Buddha are the most important. A gigantic statue of Buddha 29 feet in height, which adorn the left wall of Cave No. 26 may be said to be one of the finest sculptures of the Great One in all India. Gautama is here represented in the final apotheosis when he had been freed from all worldly desires and troubles and when he was about to enter Nirvana or Blessed Peace. This great statue is so full of life and has been carved with such skill and vigour that it has been compared by competent critics to the monumental works by Michael Angelo in stone.

There are several other sculptures of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas which rise to the same level of beauty and art. Among the lesser statues, reference may be made to those of a Naga king and queen

and an attendant found in Cave No. 19. They represent probably the legendary Naga folk converted to Buddhism. The figures are full of life and animation and bespeak an overpowering piety and devotion to Buddha.

It is not the sculptures and the carvings so much as the magnificent paintings which cover the interior of the caves that have given Ajanta its world-wide celebrity and made it one of the greatest pilgrim centres of ancient Buddhism. These paintings, executed centuries before the Italian artists began to paint, have been considered the most unique works of art to be found in Asia. The great themes are those taken from the life of the Buddha—his Birth, his Great Renunciation when he abandoned the throne and family, his encounter with the Forces of Evil and Darkness, his final renunciation and enlightenment. The paintings include portraits of Buddha, various Bodhisattvas (future Buddhas) and their deities. Scenes of secular life, too, are to be found in plenty, featuring princes, heroes, soldiers, ladies of rank dressed in

diaphanous robes, messengers, musicians and other interesting common folk. The Ajanta artists, in spite of their dominating piety and religious lore, had also drunk deep of life and were some of the most moving scenes of secular life and love.

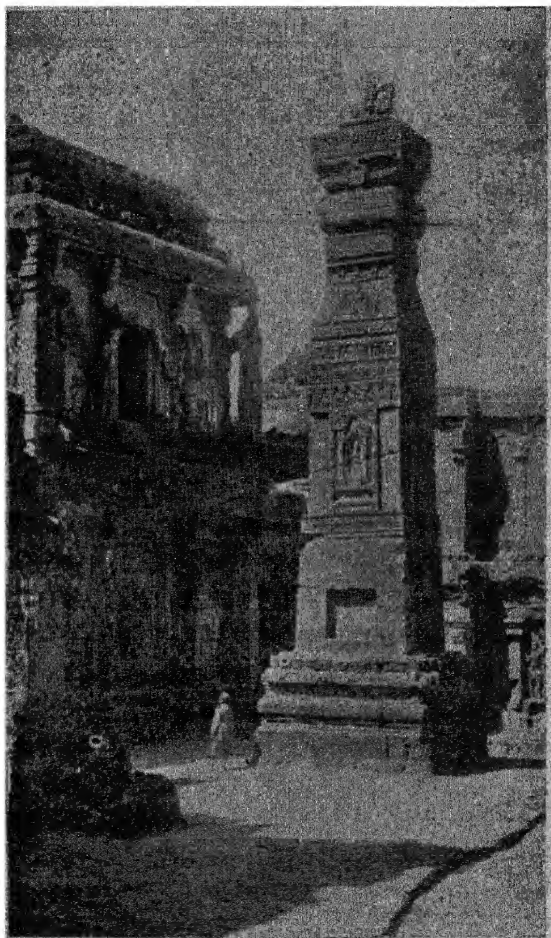
The most magnificent piece of painting is that of Buddha at the hour of Renunciation.

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## Ellora

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ELLORA has long been a famous site of pilgrimage and worship. The great Arab geographer, Masudi, mentions it as early as the tenth century A.D. In Dow's "History of Hindustan", we read of "three hundred troops who went without leave from the camp to see a famous mountain in the neighbourhood of Deogor" (Daulatabad) which has been identified with Ellora mountains. The troops who were Muslim soldiers attached to the camp of Ala-ud-Din of Delhi are said to have damaged some of the sculptures also. A French traveller named Monsieur Thevenot, who visited Ellora in 1667, was wonderstruck at Ellora's beauty and mentions that the local people believed that "all those pagodas, great and small, with their works and ornaments were made by giants, and referring to the Kailasa temple says: "Everything there is extremely well cut



KAILASA TEMPLE, ELLORA CAVE

and it is really a wonder to see so great a mass in the air, which seems so slenderly underpropped that one can hardly forbear to shiver at first entering into it." Captain B. Seeley in his 'Wonders of Ellora' written in 1824 says: "Kailasa, the Proud, wonderfully towering in hoary majesty—a mighty fabric of rock surpassed by no relic of antiquity in the known world."

The Kailasa temple, which is the most magnificent work of art in Ellora, and one or two Brahmanical caves adjoining it were constructed under the auspices of Krishna, the second Rashtrakuta king of the Deccan (725-755 A.D.) who conquered the neighbouring kingdom. He is said to have been greatly captivated by the temple Virupaksha at Pattadakal in the Badami district built by his predecessor kings and had the Kailasa temple carved out of the living rock on the model of that temple. The work was commenced in the eighth century and is a master-piece of human ingenuity and skill. The temple as the name indicates is dedicated to Siva.

The Kailasa temple stands in the midst of a court-yard, the whole having been cut out of rock. There are two huge elephants in the court-yard, beautifully sculptured. On each side of the court there is also a square pillar or ensign staff, roughly 45 feet in height. The temple proper, which rises in the middle of this court-yard, measures 164 feet from east to west and 109 feet from north to south. The outer wall of the south stairway is filled with scenes sculptured in stone from the great epic Ramayana, and the north wall is adorned with similar sculptures illustrating the other epic, the Mahabharata. In an unfinished cave on the south side of the court, there is to be found a sculptural representation of Ravana lifting the Kailasa. The sculpture is full of life and is an interesting predecessor of the similar magnificent carving found in Elephanta. The walls in the corridor of the temple contain profuse sculptures, of which those representing the Mothers of Creation may be mentioned. The temple, constructed out of a solid mass of rock left standing after the court-yard

was excavated, is a double-storied structure of elaborate workmanship. The interior decorations consist of huge statues of elephants, lions, griffins and others in various attitudes and action, and the temple itself abounds in handsome pillars, shrines and pavilions. The temple seems to have been once covered over with paintings, hence its other name Rang Mahal or Painted Palace, but there are now left only very poor vestiges of the coloured grandeur.

Ellora is noted not only for the Kailasa temple but also for numerous caves cut out of the long face of the rock. Those in the southern section belong to Buddhistic faith, are twelve in number and consist of both *viharas* (monasteries) and *chaityas* (temples). Those in the middle of the hill are Brahminical and number about 15 or 16. Those further north belong to the Jains.

The Buddhistic caves resemble those at Ajanta and are probably slightly later than they in date. Cave No. 10 of the Buddhistic caves has been considered as the best example of a Buddhistic chaitya.



It consists of a central nave with a huge daghoba at the far end and aisles on either side extending beyond the daghoba and encircling it. The aisles



#### BUDDHIST CAVE AT ELLORA

were clearly intended for circumambulation round the dagobha on which a huge figure of Buddha is seated. Cave No. 12 contains

very interesting specimens of Buddhistic sculpture—Buddha as a Teacher, Buddha in meditation, Buddha ascending to heaven and the like.

Of the Brahmanical caves which lie between the Buddhistic and Jaina caves, Cave No. 15, known as Dasavatara cave, is the most interesting one. It is in two stories and contains very prolific and powerful sculptures of Siva. Siva as Bairava wearing a garland of skulls and gripping a victim in his left hand, Siva with the sacred Bull, Siva and the Linga, Siva dancing in the burning ground. Another cave in this series may be referred to the cave known as Sita's Bath near which flows a beautiful stream. It contains a large pit or bath wherein the water was collected and which should have been frequented by the devout men who lived in these cave-retreats. It contains also several interesting sculptures.

Of the Jain caves, the Indra Sabha can be deemed the best. It contains figures of Parsvanatha and Mahavira the last of the Jaina Thirthambarars. They are

of the huge size and the meditative cast of the Buddha abounding in Buddhistic caves. There is another Jagannatha Sabha in which an abundance of loose sculpture was found. It has columns of various shapes and its ceiling seems to have been originally covered with paintings.

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## Bhadrachalam

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**B**HADRACHALAM is one of the two most famous sites of pilgrimage on the river Godavari, the other being Panchavati at the source. In fact the whole length of the river, about 900 miles from the Nasik hills down to the sea beyond Rajahmundry, is holy ground to the Hindus, celebrated in legend and song for its association with the life and adventures of Sri Ramachandra, the ideal king. The river and many specific places on its bank occur frequently in the great Epic, the Ramayana, as the abode of Rama during his pilgrimage to the South with Sita and Lakshmana. Bhadrachalam and its neighbourhood seem to have played a distinctive part in the lives of these three great figures in the epic story. It was here, says a writer in the *Indian Review*, that Sri Ramachandra lost his wife; it was here again that "long after He had shuffled off His mortal coil

the Lord manifested Himself to save His devotee Ramdas, who had loved Him not wisely but too well. Puranic tradition, historical fact and the minstrelsy of folklore have become so inextricably interwoven that the sanctity and romance of the place have been enhanced rather than diminished by the somewhat incongruous admixture and the great concourse of pilgrims who pay their "vows" and seek expiation for their sins each year at Bhadrachalam is nearly as large as those who visit the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna."

The temple dedicated to Sri Ramachandra is one of the richest of its kind in the Deccan. It is in the village of Bhadrachalam, 24 miles from the Bhadrachalam Road—the end of a branch line from Dornakal in H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions. Only recently has a service of public buses been made available between the two places. Every April an endless stream of pilgrims makes up the famous Bhadrachalam Jatra. In the picturesque words of the writer above quoted: "The journey has to be accomplished through a

serpentine track which creeps up many an ancient hill and passes through dales and woods which comprised the great Dandakaranya, silent witnesses of the woes and wanderings of Sri Ramachandra." Pilgrims arrive at Borgam Pad on the southern bank of the Godavary and "when they cross the river by crude ferry boats, like sinful souls over the Vaitarani, there heaves into sight at long last the tall Gopura, shining lustreously with beaten plates of gold of the temple of Sri Ramachandra, surrounded by twenty-four pagodas, a sight that has been worth the troublesome journey".

Tradition says that when Rama was banished for 14 years from the kingdom, he chose the Dandaka forest for his abode and the jungle near Bhadrachalam is still marked out as Rama's retreat where he spent many happy days in the company of Sita and Lakshmana.

It was near Bhadrachalam too that the greatest tragedy of Rama's life occurred—Sita's abduction by Ravana—and Rama is said to have crossed the river near Bhadrachalam on his celebrated excursion to Ceylon in search of his beloved Sita.

But a later and more historical episode has fastened itself to the temple of Bhadrachalam. The story of the building of this temple is as intriguing as any fairy tale. When Abul Hasan Tana Shah was reigning over Golconda, "an unlettered woman Dammakka living in a hamlet near the hill of Bhadrachalam saw in her vision the images of Sri Ramachandra, Sita and Lakshmana lying sheltered from prying eyes in an unfrequented spot on the top of the hill. Her dream came true when on the next day, she and her daughter clambered up the hill and at the exact spot revealed in the dream she found the divine images. Dammakka had a small *mantapa* constructed at the top for housing them. There lived at the time in another neighbouring village, Nela-kondapalli, a Brahmin of the name of Gopanna, nephew and son-in-law of the king's minister, Akkanna. One day Gopanna joined a small band of pilgrims climbing up the hill and thus came across Kabirdas, a Muslim devotee, who was also proceeding to pay his homage to the deities. The Brahmin servants of

the temple objected to a Muslim's presence at a sanctuary, and as Kabirdas turned back in dejection, it is said that the images too vanished from view. Gopanna observed with more than mortal ken the marvel of Hindu gods following a Muslim worshipper, the scales fell from his eyes, and he became suddenly enlightened. It was Gopanna who persuaded the Archakas to permit Kabir to enter the temple and thus brought back the gods. He then received Guroopadesa (spiritual initiation) from Kabir, assuming the name of Ramdas, the servant of Rama".

A more elaborate story is that of Ramdas—the theme of many folksongs and inspiring *kathas*. Ramdas paid very nearly with his life in the building of the temple. Being appointed Tahsildar of the place, he utilised 6 lakhs of the Sultan's revenue for the construction of the temple in anticipation of the king's sanction for so good a purpose. The story goes that "Tana Shah's ear had been poisoned by Muslim partisans, and Ramdas was incarcerated in the fort of Golconda awaiting execution. Rama and Lakshmana



were moved to 'pity at the plight of one who had loved them not wisely but too well; and they paid back the amount in full and obtained his release."

This mingling of tradition and history and legend has added to the sanctity of Bhadrachalam. It is but fitting that this unique feature of the Muslim patronage of a Hindu temple should be continued down to this day. For even to-day, the Tahsildar stationed at Borgam Pad is responsible for the maintenance of the temple and the preservation of its great treasures, and the Government of H. E. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad grants over Rs. 30,000 annually for its upkeep. It is a happy and unique tradition of Hindu-Muslim fraternity continued down through centuries of vicissitudes.

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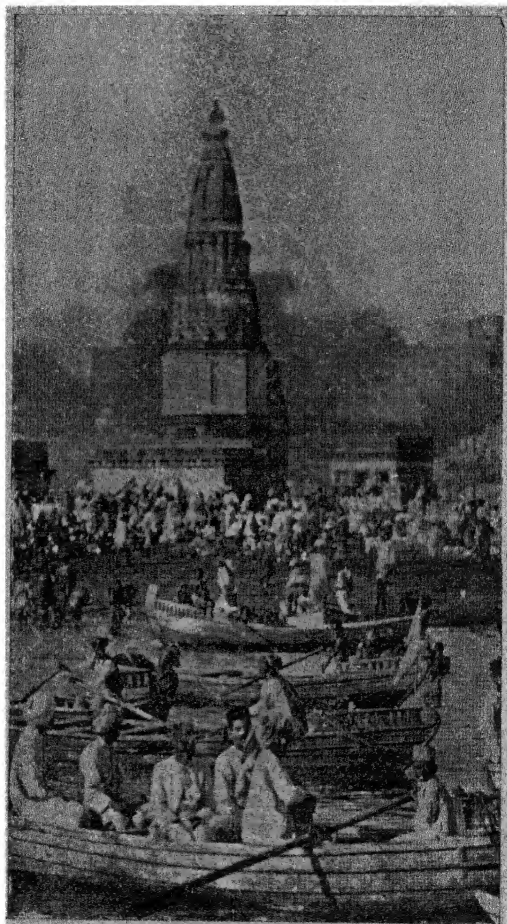
# WESTERN INDIA

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## Pandharpur

**P**ANDHARPUR is a small town on the banks of the Bhima river, a tributary of the Krishna. It is situated in the Sholapur district of the Bombay Presidency. It is 31 miles from the Barsi Road Railway Station on the G. I. P. Railway and is connected with the latter by a light railway.

The Vithoba Temple is situated near the centre of the town which lies on the right or south bank of the Bhima. There are minor temples, but the shrine of Vithoba—a form of Krishna—is the chief one and has given the place its name and its historic and religious importance. The setting of the town and temple on the banks of a broad and winding river invests them with natural beauty and forms an additional source of attraction and pleasure to the pilgrims. The broad course of the Bhima River, gay with boats, the islet temples of Narada



THE BHIMA RIVER AT PANDHARPUR

and Vishnupada, the flight of steps leading from the river, the wooded stretches of the river-side and the towers and pinnacles of numerous temples of Pandharpur which are visible above the river bank, and the tree tops present a scene of great beauty and leave a lasting impression on the mind of the pilgrim.

The story of the origin of the town and how it came to be a place sacred to Krishna as Vithoba is given at full length in the work of Mahipathi, the biographer of Marathi saints. Once upon a time the place now occupied by the Pandharpur town and temple was a forest by name Dandirvana forest. There lived in the village a Brahmin named Janudeva and his wife Satyavati who had a son named Pundalik. He proved a good son until his marriage which proved the undoing of the parents. Pundalik, under the influence of his wife, began to ill-treat his parents. He forced them, though old and decrepit, to do menial work, to grind corn, to sweep the floor, to wash cloths while he and his wife spent their days in happy idleness.

Janudeva and his wife, unable to bear the ill-treatment, joined the company of some pilgrims who were going to Benares. Pundalik and his wife came to know of it and pursued them. The parents' hearts sank within them when they saw their son overtake them. The son made them groom the horses on which he and his wife had travelled and accompanied them. One night the pilgrims including Pundalik and his parents reached the hermitage of a saint named Kukutswami where they stayed for the night. The saint welcomed and fed them and as night advanced, all fell asleep except Pundalik who lay turning on his bed restlessly. Suddenly just before daybreak, a company of beautiful women, dressed in soiled raiments, entered the saint's room; cleansed and swept the floor and then emerging from the saint's abode with clean and white garments, passed by Pundalik and disappeared. The same apparition occurred the next night also, and Pundalik, sleepless and agitated, fell at the feet of the strange damsels and asked them who they were. The eldest of them revealing

herself as the Goddess Ganges said that her companions were the other sacred rivers of India, the Jumna the Godavari and others, that they daily came to worship the saint in order to purify themselves of the sins of pilgrims who bathe in them, that thence came the original impurity of their garments and their subsequent purification. The Goddess finally added that of the innumerable pilgrims who had visited holy places, none was equal in wickedness to Pundalik himself; for, the deity said, there was no crime so dark as the ingratitude of a son to his parents. The heart of Pundalik suddenly changed and from the cruellest he became the most devout of sons. He fell at his parents' feet, implored their forgiveness and took them to Pandharpur and ever after he and his wife served them gratefully and with reverence.

At this time, Lord Krishna was living at Dwarka in the company of his queen Rukmini. The Lord was filled with a longing to meet his old companion, Radha, and got her to his side by the exorcism

of his divine powers. This angered Rukmini who fled to the Deccan and hid herself in the Dandirvana forests round about Pandharpur. Finding that she did not return, Lord Krishna was alarmed, went in search of her to Mathura and other places and at last found her, a picture of grief and jealousy, in the forests of Pandharpur. Her anger yielded to Krishna's caresses and they both became reconciled, and hand in hand, walked through the woods till they reached Pundalik's hermitage. Pundalik was waiting on his parents and even when he heard that the Divine pair were standing outside the door, he continued his filial service, throwing in the meantime a brick for the Divine visitor to stand upon. Pundalik finished his filial devotions and then prostrated himself before Krishna who was standing on the brick. Lord Krishna, whose god-like mind knew the hearts of men, forgave the slight to Himself and honoured one who so honoured his father and mother. He then raised Pundalik in His arms and bade him ever after to worship Him under the form and name

of Vithoba or Hari who stood on a brick. Pundalik immediately built a temple on the spot in which the images of Krishna and Rukmini have dwelt side by side to this day.

The temple thus built by an ardent Krishna-worshipper—one of numerous shrines to Vishnu and his avatars, which were being built all over India in the beginning of the Middle Ages—was destined to become, however, more famous than the rest. Owing chiefly to the labours and piety of a succession of gifted Maratha saints and poets, beginning with Dyana-deva and Namadev, the city and temple of Pandharpur became the source and inspiration of Maratha religious life, the rallying point and focal centre of her great men of religion. The first saint to associate the Deity of Pandharpur with a passionate cult of bhakthi and adoration as the supreme God was Namadeva, a tailor by birth. His poems are all addressed to the God of Pandharpur. In the pious acclamations and bhajans of the pilgrim crowds that march to Pandharpur, Namadev's name is the most



prominent. There is said to be a tomb or memorial to him in the Pandharpur temple. The next attractive figure associated with Pandharpur is that of the Mahar (Harijan) saint, Chokamela. He was born in the lowest of castes in the outskirts of Pandharpur. He early developed a great love of God and piety. Being a Mahar, he could not enter the temple nor even the streets of Pandharpur. He, therefore, worshipped his God from afar, praying and meditating on the banks of the Bhima. He was often persecuted; but his sanctity was eventually vindicated and he was admitted into the temple and the privileges of worship by the Brahmins themselves. The last great devotee of Vithoba was Tukaram, the celebrated Maratha mystic and poet of the 17th century, whose poems and story have an all-India reputation. He constantly visited Pandharpur and held bhajans and sankirtans and probably composed many of his famous poems extempore on those occasions. A most touching story narrated by the Marathi hagiologist, Mahipathi, testifies to his deep love for Pandharpur. Tukaram

once fell ill and could not go on his usual pilgrimage to Pandharpur for the autumn festivals. He wrote instead a number of songs in the form of a message to the Deity of Pandharpur and sent them by the hand of the pilgrims entreating them to bring back to him the reply which, he said, the Deity was sure to give. The pilgrims went with the poetic message, and Tukaram lay waiting on the spot by the road-side where he first met the pilgrims, till they returned. This incident is probably true as it is in perfect keeping with the emotional and mystical temperament of Tukaram. The poems alleged to have been sent are extant, are full of deep poetry and pathos and fully corroborate the episode. These saints who, in their lives centuries ago, had been devoted to the God of Pandharpur, are still borne in palanquins, in which are placed models of their holy footprints, to the temple of Pandharpur on festive occasions. The kings of Vijayanagara built a temple to Vithoba—a magnificent and highly artistic structure—but it was left unfinished—the

story being that the idol of Pandharpur, which was invited to take its abode in the shrine, refused to come, on account of some reason or other.

It may be said that the temple of Pandharpur is the "national" temple of Maharashtra. What Puri is to Bengal and Orissa, what Chidambaram is to South India, that is Pandharpur to the Marathi-speaking people.

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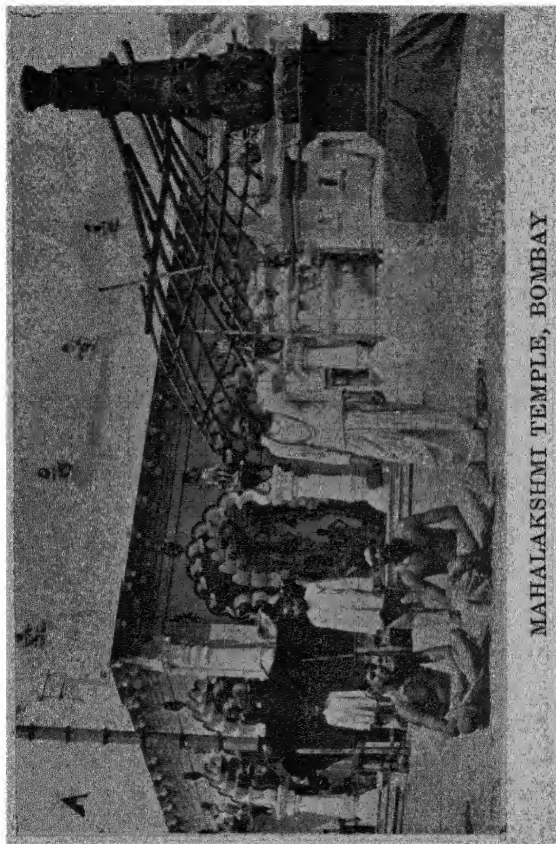
## Bombay

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THERE are about 400 temples in Bombay, some of which lie in groups and some stand separate. In the area of Buleshwar, there are about 40 temples, each belonging to a particular sect of Hinduism. The most important temples of Bombay are those of Mumbadevi, Walkeshwar, Babulnath, Mahalakshmi, Prabhadevi and that of Shri Venkateswar at Fanaswadi.

Mumbadevi is the guardian deity of Bombay. Her fame is older than the modern city which itself derives its name from her. Her temple is in Pydhoni. It has a very large income and attracts a large crowd of worshippers every Tuesday and Friday in the week. Next to it is a fine Siva temple, known as that of Buleshwarnath wherein poor Gujarati Brahmins sit selling flowers and Vilva leaves for worship throughout the day.

On the road from Chowpathi to Walkeshwar stands the temple to Babulnath, a form of Siva. A flight of



MAHALAKSHMI TEMPLE, BOMBAY

100 steps leads to the temple. The temple is a fine one and enshrines a Siva linga with a coat made of silver rupees. The Bull in front of the shrine has silver sheathed horns and the deity on festive days is carried in a silver chariot. The temple is said to have been built by a goldsmith named Pandu Seth Sivaji some 125 years ago. West of Bombay lies Mahalakshmi with a Railway station of that name in it. It lies on the sea-shore and in a mound near the sea there is a beautiful temple to Mahalakshmi. The temple, whose founder is unknown, dates from the eighteenth century and occupies a large place in the religious life of the Hindus of Bombay. It contains three images, the central one of the benign Mahalakshmi, with Maha Kali and Maha Saraswati on either side. Big festivals are celebrated in the temple in April-May and Navaratri seasons. The Jain temples of Bombay are numerous and contain beautiful reliefs and paintings representing the very best Hindu art. The Parsis who form the next most numerous enterprising section of the population of Bombay, have also a number of fire temples.

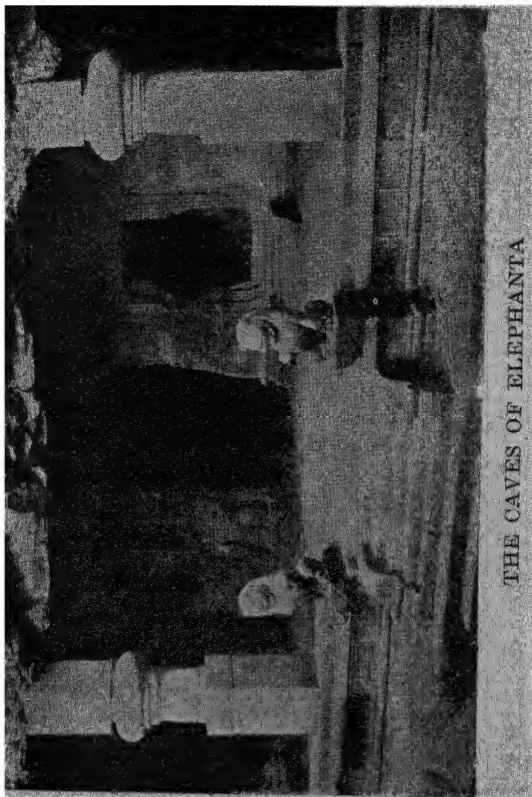
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## Elephanta

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**E**LEPHANTA is a small island lying across the Bombay harbour, about 4 miles from the island city. The present name Elephanta was given to the island by the Portuguese on account of a large stone elephant which stood near the old landing place on the south side of the island. The elephant has ceased to exist having crumbled into a mere heap of stones which have been removed to the Victoria Gardens at Bombay.

According to tradition, the island was once a prosperous ancient city, traces of which are still to be found in scattered brick and stone foundations. De Conto in his book "Da Asia" records the legends associated with the island. King Banasura had a daughter by name Okha or Usha who dedicated herself to perpetual virginity. He ruled the island and in his time gold rained in it for three hours and the place was thence called Santupori (Shontipura), the isle of gold.



THE CAVES OF ELEPHANTA



The glory and importance of Elephanta consist in its rock-cut cave-temples. There are four complete ones, two others being incomplete or just begun and left unfinished. The most famous of these cave-temples is the one known as the Great Cave situated in the western and larger of the two hills at an elevation of about 250 feet above high-water level. "The road to the caves," says an English art-critic, "is beautiful. The jungle fringes the path, which runs along the bottom of a sinuous valley. . . . . The forest swells upward in soft undulations of burnished copper green, above which palm trees tower here and there. Beyond the fronded heads of these giants is the deep blue sky which, where it meets that effulgent green, reminds us of some of Titan's most marvellous passages of colour. . . . . Sometimes our path plunges into cool shadows but generally it basks naked in the sun."

The caves were all meant to be temples and the most magnificent of them is the one known as the Great Cave. It measures about 130 feet from the front.

entrance to the back and its length from east to west is the same. The path leads through three sculptured compartments to the back aisle wherein is to be found the famous Trimurti. Says Sister Nivedita: "How splendid is the approach to the great reredos in three panels that takes up the whole back wall of the great cell. And in the porch, as we enter this central chamber, how impressive are the carvings to right and left! On the left in low relief is a picture representing Shiva seated in meditation. . . . On our right is another low relief of Durga, throwing herself into the Universe in God-intoxication. Behind her the very air is vocal with saints and angels chanting her praises. . . . And we hold our breath in astonishment as we look and listen, for here is a freedom of treatment never surpassed in art, combined with a message like that of medieval catholicism. . . . Our astonishment is with us still as we penetrate the shadows and find our way amongst the grey stone pillars to that point from which we can best see the great central Trimurti of

the reredos. How softly, how tenderly it gleams out of the obscurity! Shadows wrought on shadows, silver-grey against the scarcely deeper darkness: this in truth is the very immanence of God in human life. On its right is the sculptured panel representing the Universe according to the Shaivite idea. Shiva and Parvati ride together on the bull. . . . On the left of the Trimurti, finally, is the portrayal of the world of the Vaishnavite. Vishnu the Preserver has for consort Lakshmi the Divine Grace and the whole Universe seems to hail Him as God. It is the heads of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu grouped together in one great image that make up the Trimurti which fills the central recess between these panels."

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## Nasik

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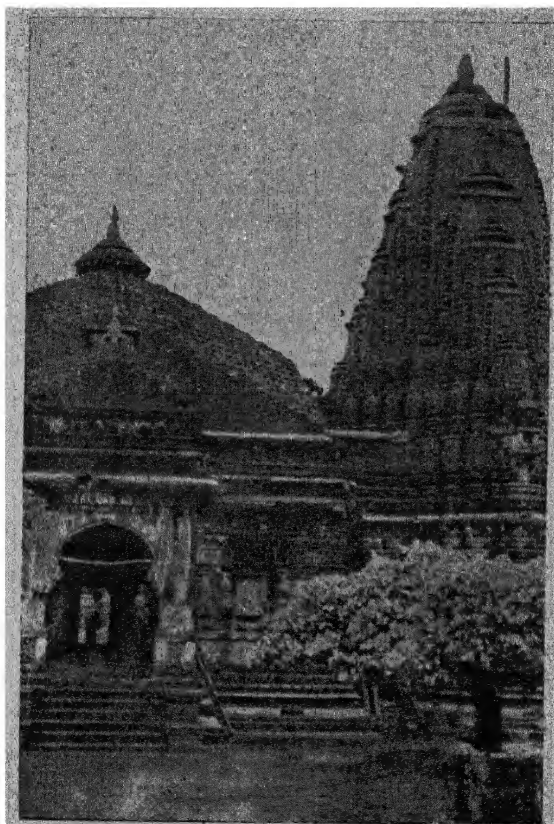
NASIK is the headquarters of the Nasik District (Bombay Presidency) and lies 5 miles north-west of Nasik Road Station on the north-eastern line of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. The town, which is situated some 30 miles from the source of the Godavari, has been an important place of pilgrimage. The place owes its sacredness to the sanctity of the River Godavari and to the fact that it comprehends the old Panchavati—the place where the divine Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, lived with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana, immediately after their exile from Ayodhya. Even as Ayodhya and Rameswaram derive their sacredness from the birth and exploits of Rama respectively, even so Nasik is considered sacred because Rama and his supremely chaste consort lived here for some time and bathed in the waters of the Godavari.

The Godavari in the region of Nasik flows eastwards through a group of small hills, then turns to the south and after

flowing in that direction for a mile, again turns and flows eastward. The town of Nasik lies on the right or south-eastern bank of the Godavari and does not boast of any great antiquity. The sacred Kshetra known as Panchavati, lies on the left bank of the river and is connected with the main town by a bridge, the Victoria Bridge built four decades ago. The banks on either side of the river at Panchavati have been built up into ghats with masonry walls and flights of steps leading to the river for a distance of some 400 yards. Temples and places of worship abound here on either bank and are to be found even in the midst of the river-bed. The river contains a number of sacred *thirthas* (or pools or kunds) wherein the pious pilgrim has to bathe. They are sacred to various deities. The most important and the holiest is the Ramakund.

Adjoining Panchavati, about a mile to the east, there is another sacred spot known as Tapovan in which is found an important temple of Rama.

There are many Buddhistic and Jaina caves scattered all about the neighbouring



TEMPLE OF TRIMBAKESHWAR, TRIMBAK

hills. The town of Trimbak, which lies 20 miles west of Nasik, is a very holy place, a big Sivakshetra, has a temple which contains one of the twelve celebrated Lingams of India. The temple is built at the base of the mountain known as the Brahmagiri mountain. Holy legend tells us that once Brahma and Siva fell to cursing each other in a quarrel, and that the former cursed the latter to take shape on earth as the Brahmagiri hill. Brahma subsequently recanted his curse, but Siva delighted to reside in the Brahmagiri hill and hence the holiness of the hill and the surrounding region. A huge temple to Siva came to be built in the village of Trimbak at the base of the hill which, in course of time, became one of the most sacred shrines of Siva.

The source of the river Godavari, represented by a small waterfall through a cow's mouth, lies near Trimbak. At the height of some 700 steps above the village of Trimbak is a broad platform with walls on three sides and a hill on the fourth. At the foot of this hill on the face of the rock is carved a cow's mouth

from which water flows in trickles into a stone reservoir below, and then disappears from view. This is said to be the source of the Godavari. A stone pavilion covers the sacred waterfall. A priest is constantly in attendance and he offers worship and flowers at the cow's mouth at the instance of the pilgrims. The visit to this fall is preceded by the worship of Trimbakesvara.

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## Dwarka

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DWARKA is one of the four great celebrated pilgrim cities of India, situated at different points of the compass, the other three being Rameswaram in the south, Puri in the east and Badrinath in the north. Like Puri on the east coast, Dwarka is situated on the coast-line in the midst of sylvan surroundings and has a cold and bracing climate. To the traveller and pilgrim from the surrounding arid plains, it offers a haven of refuge and delightful rest.

The sacred importance of Dwarka is bound up with Indian epic story. Centuries ago, the earth was oppressed by demons, the fiercest of whom was Kamsa. Earth assumed the form of a cow, approached God Vishnu and begged of Him to descend below and save her from the hands of demons. Vishnu, pleased with her prayers, promised that He would

incarnate himself as Sri Krishna and destroy Kamsa and his followers.

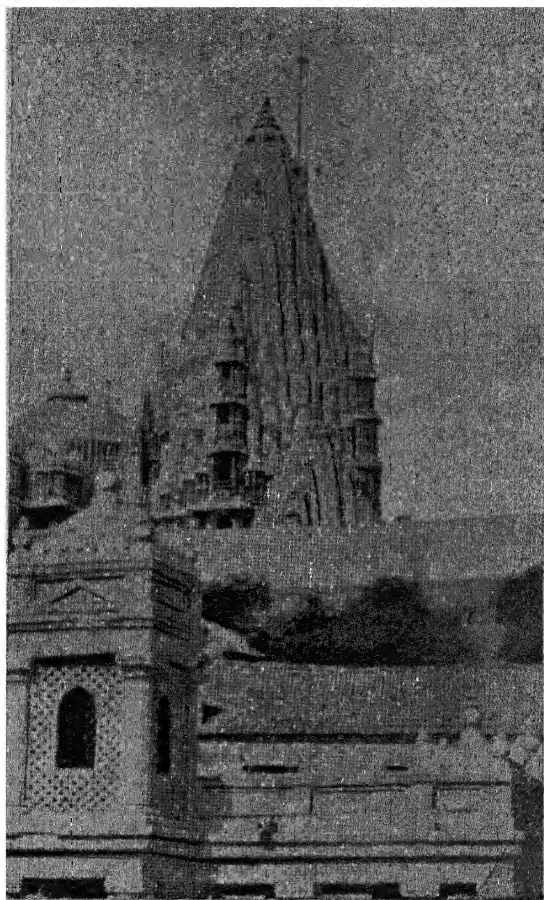
Vasudev was the king of the Yadavas, who lived in Madhyadesa (Middle India). He had married Devaki, Kamsa's sister. When the marriage was celebrated, a ghost-like voice came from the Heavens and prophesied that the eighth child of that marriage would kill his uncle, Kamsa. The latter, filled with fury and terror, ran at his sister with a view to kill her. Vasudeva rose and promised that he would bring before Kamsa all the children born to Devaki for destruction immediately on birth. Kamsa put guard over Devaki and, in order to save his life, had one child after another born to Devaki grimly put to death. The seventh child and the eighth, however, escaped Kamsa's wrath. They were secretly taken away from Mathura to the forests of Gokula and were there brought up unknown as children of a cowherd Nandagopa by name. They were Balarama and Sri Krishna respectively.

Kamsa was now filled with greater fear and terror than ever and devised

various means to bring about Krishna's death. All his devices failed. At last Kamsa invited Krishna and his brother Balarama to a wrestling match, hoping that his own hireling wrestlers would make an end of them. Krishna, however, endowed with Divine prowess as he was, threw Kamsa's wrestlers one after another on the ground and finally dragged Kamsa himself from his unworthy royal seat by the hair and slew him on the spot.

Krishna next placed Kamsa's brother Ugrasena on the latter's throne; and then with his brother Balarama and followers went westward to the sea-shore of Gujarat and there founded the beautiful city, Dwarka. It thus became the capital of Krishna's ideal kingdom, the place whence He, the God incarnate, showered his love and blessings on all who were pure and devout of heart.

There are several temples, 33 in number and sacred tanks (*kunds*) 9, in and about Dwarka. The most important of the former is the temple to Sri Krishna, called Dwarkanath, also Sri Ranchodraju. The temple is called Jagatmandir. It is



SRI KRISHNA TEMPLE, DWARKA

built of sandstone plastered with chunam; and the main structure is five storeys in height, the highest being 100 feet from the ground. The whole is surmounted by a conical spire rising to the height of 150 feet. A flag 104 feet in height is displayed from the temple staff. The temple built on the bank of the Gomti creek has a majestic and imposing appearance. The temple, both in design and execution, displays extraordinary exuberance of fancy, lavishness of labour and elaboration of detail.

Of the sacred tanks, the most important one is the Gomati *kund*. All pilgrims visiting Dwarka must bathe in this *kund* and according to the scriptures, purify their souls from sins.

The city has been a celebrated place of pilgrimage from very ancient times. Its place in the Puranas and Epic story, its association with the most loved of Hindu Avatars, Sri Krishna,—at once God and Human Friend, Warrior and Philosopher—have given the place an all-India importance from historic times. Pilgrims, we read, visited this place in

thousands every year in pre-railway days, little discouraged by the discomfort and troubles attending the journey which often took weeks and months. It may be mentioned that at present Dwarka is linked up by railways with the rest of India, and pilgrims are now going with comfort right up to Dwarka.

Apart from its association with the Epic hero Krishna, Dwarka has also acquired great historical importance as one of the seats of learning and Vedantic teaching established by the great reformer Sankaracharya. The great reformer, it is well known, arose at a time when Buddhism and other non-Vedic cults were rampant; and his efforts were directed to put them down and establish the pure principles of Vedantic religion. He toured all over India proclaiming his doctrines and refuting those of the heretical sects. He embodied his teachings in monumental commentaries on the central works of the Hindu Faith, the Sutras, the Upanishads and the Gita. With a view to permanent propagation of his teachings and to bring together the various Hindu peoples, he

established four *Pitams* or episcopal seats at four different places in India, of which this ancient Dwarka was one, the other three being Sringeri in Mysore, Puri on the east and Badrinath in the Northern Himalayas. The seat at Dwarka has ever since been occupied by an unbroken succession of pontiffs and has helped to keep alive and propagate the principles of Vedantic Hinduism in Western India.

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## Pindara : The Pind Floating Tirth

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CONSIDERABLE attention of the people is now-a-days directed to the announcements notifying the organisation of special pilgrim trains incorporating visits to various pilgrim centres. But when one hears about the tangible religious proof shown at a certain place in these days of conviction, the desire to visit the place is doubly intensified. Such a solid proof is visible at Pindara when a Pind, a lump composed of cooked rice which must, according to its natural ingredients, go down to the bottom of the water when put into it, is seen floating on the surface of the Kund. This is a miracle and is a potent cause why people far and near flock there in large numbers all the year round.

According to the Holy Puranas, the visit to Dwarka is not complete without a visit to Pindara some twenty miles from Dwarka. Legend has it that at the end of the historic battle of Mahabharata between the Pandavas and Kauravas, Sri Krishna, the comrade-in-arms of the

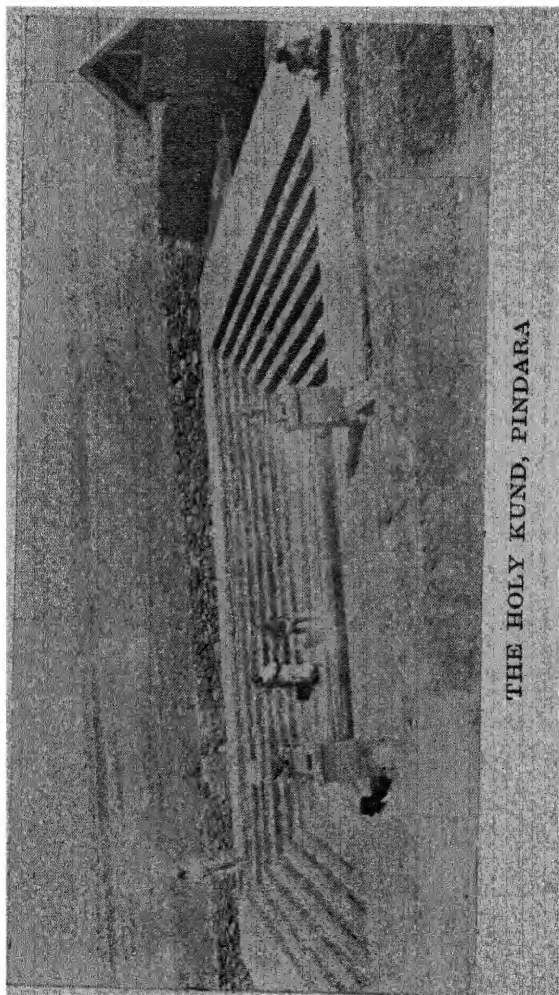


Pandavas and Arjuna, started on a peregrination to all the prominent holy Kshetras for performing Shraddha ceremony for the liberation of the souls of the Kauravas who met with their untimely end in the Great Battle. Despite visiting many places in this way, Arjuna was not satisfied with the mere mention that his brethren were liberated. He wanted some solid proof which he could see with his eyes. He revealed his doubt to Sri Krishna who thought the question a hard nut to crack. He, therefore, intended to go to Pindara to refer it to Durvasa Muni whom, he thought, to be the proper judge for the solution of such a complex problem. The five Pandavas headed by Sri Krishna went to the hermitage of Durvasa at Pindara which was the glorious abode and place of penance of the Muni, who was noted for his fiery disposition. He cursed any one who dared to incur his odium. They told him the object of their mission. Durvasa Muni meditated on the matter and opined that they should perform the Shraddha of the Kauravas at Pindara, which was the appropriate

place and would afford the visible proof as desired by Arjuna. Under the direction and supervision of Durvasa, Arjuna undertook the performance of the Shraddha ceremony of the Kauravas, strictly according to the dictates of the Shastras. When the time came for offering Pinda, Arjuna told Durvasa Muni that since his brethren were valiant warriors, he intended to offer an iron Pinda signifying strength of arms. Arjuna was anxious to see the Pinda floated with Chandan and Tulsi floating on the water, thus affording him proof of the salvation of his brethren. A large iron Pinda (an oblong ball) was thereon prepared and placed in a utensil. When Arjuna endeavoured to lift the utensil he found himself unable to do so. Sri Krishna then commanded Bhimasena to take up the Pinda and put it into the water. This weight was nothing to Bhimasena, who was the stoutest of the five Pandavas and was distinguished for his strength. He took up the utensil easily and in the twinkling of an eye threw the Pinda into the water with such a force that it created a great roaring sound

like that of a thunderbolt. To the surprise of all the on-lookers, the Pinda came to the surface of the water with Chandan and Tulsi on the top and floated like a piece of wood. All became overjoyed and the mind of Arjuna was appeased on seeing the proof. Sri Krishna was mightily pleased with Durvasa Muni for the solution of their doubt and asked him to select a boon. Durvasa Muni requested Sri Krishna that even in the horrible Kaliyuga, Pindas of rice offered by any man after undergoing the Shraddha ceremony at that place should float on the surface of the water in the celebrated holy Kund as a proof for the liberation of the soul of their ancestors. Sri Krishna granted the request. Since those days the place is regarded as a holy Tirtha where the descendants have the gratification of seeing at the lake the floating of the Pindas. This supernatural phenomenon has enabled the place to build up its great name.

There is another illustration testifying to the religious significance of the place which is given below.



THE HOLY KUND, PINDARA

There lived in days of yore in Benares a learned and religious Brahmin named Meghavi. His devoted consort was equally pious and performed Uma Vrit. But in the course of her Vrit, she enjoyed the company of her husband. Goddess Uma was enraged at her failing and cursed her in a dream that she would take her next birth among animals with the knowledge of her previous life and would incur the sin of killing a Brahmin. When she got up, she narrated the dream to her husband, who advised her to perform Girija Vrit on the full moon night to get rid of the curse. As a result of the Vrit, Goddess Girija was appeased at long last and said that her curse could not be revoked, but since she repented for her action and pleased her by practising Girija Vrit, she would show her the way to mild the influence of the curse. Goddess Girija advised her to worship God Shiva with full enthusiasm and that he would help her in the calamitous times.

Many years rolled by and she took birth among the cows of king Vijaybahu.

in the Vindhya-chala Hills. The king was very devout and God-fearing and daily gave away a hundred cows in charity. Once upon a time a learned Brahmin approached the king and demanded in charity a particular cow who was the animal form of Meghavi's wife. The king decorated the cow with ornaments and clothes and gave with the calf to the Brahmin. The Brahmin was pleased and having blessed the king departed with the cow and the calf. On the way the cow became obstinate and did not go further. The Brahmin became very angry and began to belabour her with a stick. But all was to no purpose. He then parted with the calf and began to go on. Being separated from the calf, the cow attacked him with the result that he sustained serious injuries to which he succumbed. The cow thus incurred the sin of killing a Brahmin and turned black according to the curse of her previous life. When she became aware of her mistake, she lamented and wandered from one holy place to another to purify herself of the sin. She at last having the knowledge of her previous

birth, went to God Shiva for removal of the sin. God Shiva having been pleased with the devotion in her previous life, advised her to proceed to Pindara on the western coast and to take a dip in the Pind Tarak Kund. In pursuance of the sacred injunction, she went to the place suggested by God Shiva and bathed there with piety. She at once got back her original white form and got rid of the sin and at the end of the animal life regained the human form.

This is the Puranic history of Pindara which seems to have been neglected. The remnants of Rishi Durvasa's Ashram, which may interest the students of archæology and one of the twenty-six Bethaks of the Vaishnavites close by put in by the founder of the faith, are among the many attractions of this great religious and historical place.

There is a sea close by and a well, with sweet water sunk by the munificence of a wealthy Sheth of Bombay. There is also a Dharamshala near-by and a priest who attends to the Shraddha ceremony and to the needs and comforts of the pilgrims.

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## Sadhbella in Sind

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IN the city of Sukkur on the Indus in Sind, there is an islet in the midst of the river, abounding in natural beauty of grove and forest. It was long a retreat for monks and wandering sadhus of the surrounding districts and hence the name of the islet—Sadhbella “a forest for Sadhus”. A Hindu monk of the last century, who had wandered all over India by name Swami Bankhandji Maharaj arrived here in 1821 A.D., and, struck by the beauty of the spot, made up his mind to settle on the island and build a worthy temple to God. The times were propitious. The province of Sind had passed from the hands of the Mirs into those of the British and in the peaceful conditions that dawned, the enterprising Hindu monk found men and money with which to construct a beautiful temple, with silver doors and marble sculptured panels in honour of Sri Sadhbella in a far away and outlying part of India.



How the temple was built and the island became the property of Swamiji Bankhandji Maharaj and his successors is the subject of a curious and interesting anecdote thus narrated by a writer in the *Modern Review* for June 1939 :

“Only a score of years had passed since the first landing of the Swamiji in Sind that the province saw a change of rulers. . . . Captain Pan Wales was sent to administer Sukkur; and the Sadhbella rock catching his fancy, he sent for artisans and masons to build a bungalow for him on the Sadhbella grounds. Next day Captain Wales was astonished to find the work done by his men on the previous day lying all dismantled. He scented in it mischief on the part of the Hindu labourers who, he thought, must be in league with the Sadhus who had settled there and he sent away all of them replacing them by Mahomedan labourers; and the same thing happened again. Captain Wales, finding the Mahomedan labourers to be no better than the Hindus, stationed a British guard to keep watch at night, but the guard could not prevent the strange

crumbling away of the construction and dissolving, as it were, of the solid substances into thin air. Captain Pan Wales could not think of any other device than of ordering the Swamiji to quit the spot. The Swamiji was curtly asked to betake himself elsewhere and he vanished immediately . . . . . The same night Captain Wales as well as his wife were seized by a racking stomach pain; and, think as they might, they could not account for it until Mrs. Wales bethought herself of the Sadhbella incident. . . . . As soon as it was morning, the Captain went in search of the Swamiji, but returned disappointed. Then he sent for all the big wigs of the city and charged them to seek and find out the Swamiji by the next morning. To save the poor people from being harassed by Captain Wales, the Swamiji met the Captain the next evening when he had begun to lose all hopes of finding him out. Captain Wales ran towards him and offered his sincerest apologies to the Swamiji, which the latter deigned to accept. . . . . Captain Wales granted a

kind of charter to the Swamiji securing the Sadhbella for him and his fraternity."

After Swami Bankhandji Maharaj, the founder of Sadhbella, many Swamijis have succeeded to the *gadi*. . . . . The present head of Sadhbella is His Holiness Harnamdasji Maharaj. He is looked upon with veneration and respect all over India, and a reference is made to him whenever any useful or generous scheme is launched in the province. He is universally regarded as a champion of the Hindu cause and a staunch supporter of the Cow Protection movement.

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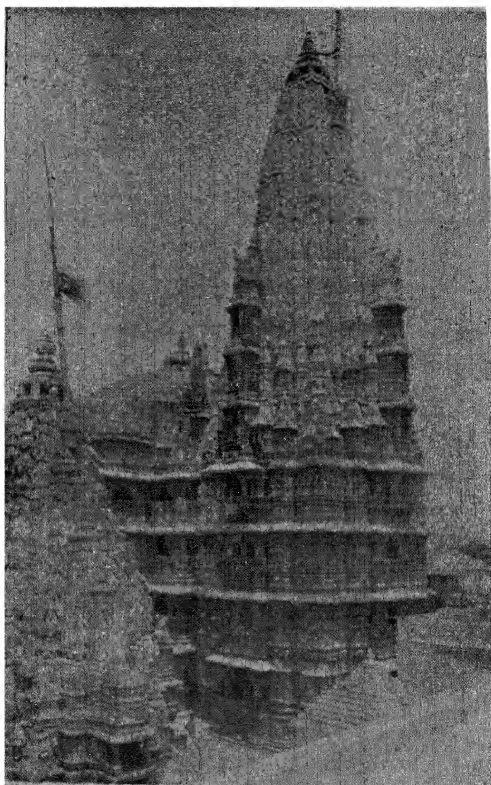
## BARODA

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**B**ARODA, the capital city of the Gaekwar's State in Western India, is as beautiful and picturesque as any in the East. The city with the cantonment has a population of 112,860. In wealth and splendour it is second to none among the great cities of the Indian States. Baroda has played an important part in the history of the Marathas; but the progress it has made in recent times, particularly in the long reign of H. H. Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar and of the present ruler has almost eclipsed the splendour of its medieval history. Under a succession of distinguished Dewans, the State has grown from strength to strength; and the capital city with its magnificent palaces and temples bear witness to the remarkable progress it has made in recent years.

Public gardens and royal palaces abound in the city, but not the least of the attractions are the innumerable Hindu temples which crowd the city and indeed the whole State.

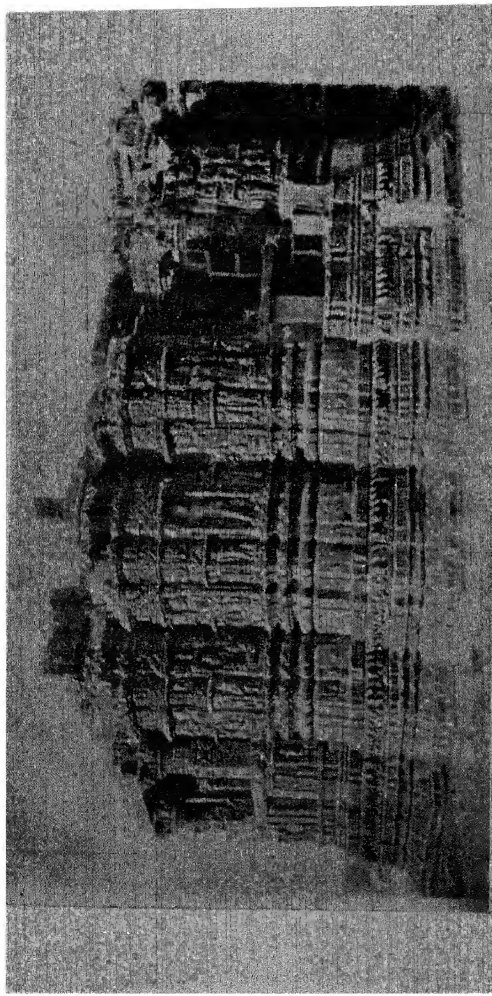
Baroda State possesses temples some of which might well be termed architectural gems. They are not very old being late medieval in origin. Even the present main temple at Dvaraka, one of the four *dhamas* of the Hindus, is not a very old structure. It is doubtful if it is anterior to the Mughul rule. That it is one of the most sacred and chief temples of worship of the Hindu India is undoubted. Here is a photograph which gives an almost complete view of it. The Kalika Mata temple at Dabhoi, the ancient Darbhavati, is a magnificent structure and affords a good example of the Hindu architecture of medieval Gujarat. The mouldings and sculptures with which its outer walls are profusely ornamented are typical of the rich Hindu style of Gujarat of about the 18th century after Christ. The whole exterior is full of sculptures and various carvings. Bands of mouldings and bas-reliefs cover it from the basement and one would wonder at the patience of the sculptor with which he adorned the structure. Though it is a place of worship, yet it is not a



DVARKADHISA TEMPLE AT DVARAKA

distinct sanctuary in the ordinary sense of the word.

An account of two old sanctuaries of great architectural value is being given here though neither of them is now a living temple. One of them is the Sun temple at Modhera, a small village in the Chanasma taluk of the Mehsana District. It can be reached from Patan as well as from Chanasma. Conveyances can be had from both the places. From Patan it is more than 20 miles but from Chanasma it is only 10 miles. The Modhera temple consists of two separate blocks of buildings. The eastern block is the outer open *mandapa* or porch entirely supported upon pillars, while the western block contains the main hall and shrine or the *sanctum sanctorum* and is enclosed all round by walls. Both the blocks are now roofless but in other respects they are in a fairly stable condition. Measures have been taken to conserve it thoroughly and it has been protected under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act. It was built without any mortar or other cementing material.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUN TEMPLE (MAIN TEMPLE) S. W. AT MODHERA



though iron clamps were used here and there to secure the joints. Like many other Hindu temples it was demolished by the Mussalmans who, not content with defacing the figure sculptures, are said to have placed bags of gunpowder in the underground shrine and blown it up with the upper cell, destroying the *s'ikhara* of the magnificent temple.

The whole sanctuary consists of the *garbhagriha* or adytum, a *gudha-mandapa* or hall, a *sabha* or *ranga-mandapa* or outer hall and a *kunda* or sacred tank. Its construction fulfills the main requirements of the *s'ilpa sastras* and is typically Hindu. It is rectangular in plan, its length inside the wall is 51 feet 9 inches or almost exactly double of its width which is 25 feet 8 inches. The cell is 11 feet square inside and is enclosed by its own walls between which and the outer walls of the temple is the circum-ambulatory passage or *pradakshinapatha*.

The roof of the hall is supported mainly by eight principal columns each 18 feet 6 inches in height, arranged in an octagon. Each side of the hall has an entrance

and is decorated with two large balcony windows one on either side. The central area was covered by a splendid carved dome nearly the whole of which is now gone. The walls have niches enshrining images of Surya marked by long Persian boots. The columns are most lavishly carved from base to capital. They are octagonal in plan changing to round near the top. The architraves are also covered with profuse carving.

The sanctum enshrined an image of Surya the Sun-god which is now missing. The seat of the image was recovered when the debris was cleared. The seven horses of the god are carved on it, their fore-quarters are projecting and prancing forward as is usually seen in the representations of this god. How this cell was entered is not quite clear. There is no entrance from the sides. Possibly it was reached by a trap-door and ladder from the floor above. This floor does not exist now except for a few projecting slabs round the edges. Possibly this was a chamber for keeping temple jewels in safety. The door-way of the shrine is richly decorated

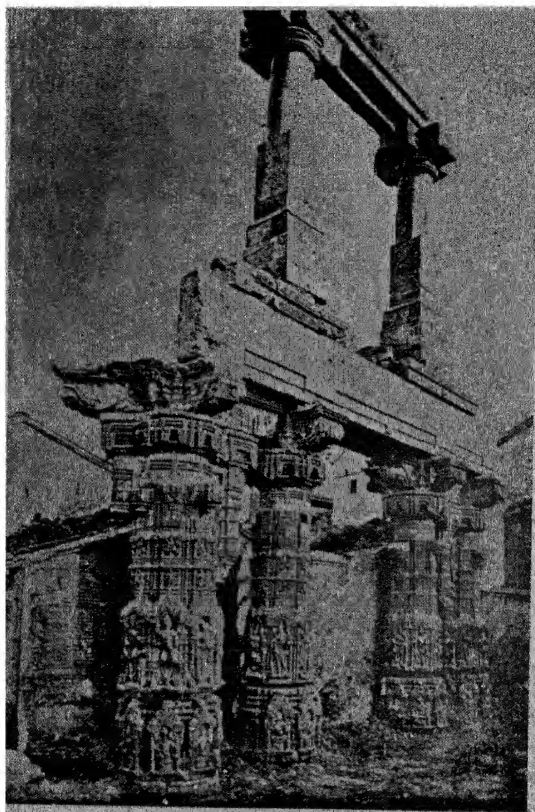
and the figure of Surya is repeated over and over again. In the circumambulatory path there are well cut niches but the idols which they contained are all gone. The exterior of the temple is profusely carved. The mouldings and sculptures on the walls of the *mandapa* are arranged in horizontal bands, whilst on the *sikhara* they follow vertical lines. This arrangement produces a very sparkling effect, which is not easy to attain. The carving in the *mandapa*, especially on the columns, is marked with representations which are revoltingly obscene and remind us of the amorous figures in the temples of Orissa, Chhatarpur and other places. It is not impossible that the sculptor who carved these images in the Modhera temple got an inspiration from the Black Pagoda or the Sun-temple at Konarak.

The *mandapa* is the most elegant feature of this temple. In front of the eastern entrance to the *sabhamandapa* and at the head of the flight of steps leading to the beautiful adjoining pond stand two beautiful columns which are detached or free from the temple building.

Probably they were *Kirtistambhas*. The adjacent tank is a complete example of its kind. It is now known as *Rama-kunda*. It is rectangular in construction and measures 176 feet by 120 feet. The recesses and miniature shrines on all of its sides and the well-engraved images seen in them decorate the pond, adding to the beautiful effect of the reflection of the temple in its clear waters. The masonry of the tank, like that of the temple, is without mortar and consists entirely of blocks of stone fitted together in the way of the old Hindu sanctuaries. The temple of Modhera stands on a mound and faces east. It is so constructed that the rising sun at the equinoxes would shine straight through the *Sabhamandapa* door into the *garbha-graha* or shrine proper.

On the strength of an inscription on the inner wall of the cells, which is dated in the Vikrama Samvat 1088 (=1026-27), it may be safely surmised that the temple was built about the eleventh century of the Christian era.

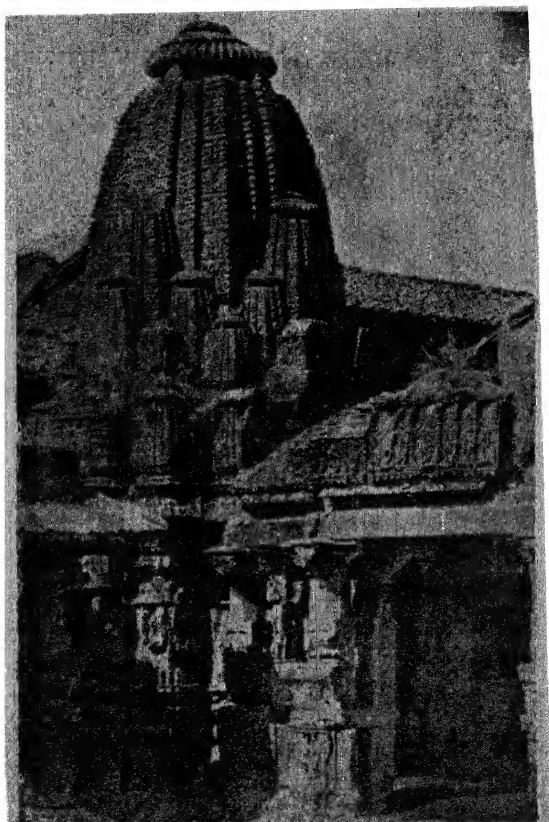
Another noteworthy temple in the State is the Rudramahalaya or the great temple



RUDRAMAHALAYA AT SIDDHPUR

of Siva at Siddhpur, a Railway station on the metre gauge section of the B. B. & C. I. which runs from Ahmedabad to Delhi. It is the chief town of the taluk of that name in the district of Mehsana lying sixty-four miles to the north of Ahmedabad. It is known for its great Siva temple called Rudramahalaya, *i.e.*, the great abode of Rudra or Siva. Rudramal or Rudramala is the popular name of the sanctuary. Probably Mularaja the famous Chavada (Chapotkata) king (961-996 A.D.) commenced building it, but it was completed by Siddharaja the most celebrated and successful king of medieval Gujarat (1094-1143 A.D.). It was sacked and devastated first by Alauddin Khalji and then by the Gujarat Sultan Ahmad Shah. A large portion of it where the sanctum sanctorum stood is in the possession of Mussalmans who are using it as a mosque. The rest is looked after by the Archæological Department through the Public Works Department of the State. It was, perhaps, one of the largest and most elaborate temples ever built in India. Originally it consisted of a great central building of

two or more storeys in height, consisting of a shrine and great hall, facing the river Sarasvati on the east and having three great entrance porches, one each in the north, east and south of the hall. In the court-yard and around the main temple were several smaller or subsidiary shrines chiefly grouped around the back. There were, also, three great ornamental arches or *toranas*, one of which stood at the top of the steps leading up from the river, and before the main entrance of the temple, while upon either side, and further in, stood another. All that is now left of this once splendid structure are four great columns of the hall, which stood before the shrine door, and which still uphold one of the enormous eight stone beams which supported the great dome as seen in the accompanying illustration. An idea of what it must have looked like can be found from the accompanying photo of a miniature subsidiary shrine at the back of it. In the portion which now serves as a mosque, the old beautiful rosettes, lotuses, etc. cut in single stone blocks are still preserved. They form

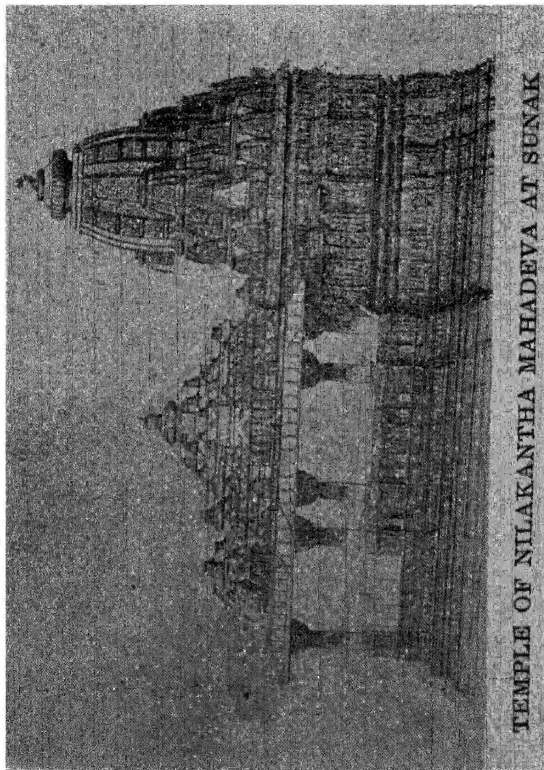


A SMALL SHRINE IN RUDRAMALA COURT



part of the ceiling. The artistic skill with which they are engraved cannot fail to excite admiration for the old *silpins* of Gujarat.

Out of the living temples of the State, the one at Sunak is, perhaps, the best and possibly the oldest. Sunak or Sonak is a village in the Mehsana district or the former Kadi *Prant* of the State and lies in the Siddhapur taluka. It can best be approached from Unjha, a small station on the Ahmedabad-Delhi section of the B. B. & C. I. Railway. Though there is no regular road to it, buses, however, can run to it. From Unjha it is about four miles towards the west, but from Siddhapur it is nine miles to the south-south west. The old temple which is still used for worship is dedicated to Siva and called Nilakantha Mahadeva, *i.e.*, Siva with the blue or black throat—so discoloured by his swallowing the poison produced at the churning of the milky ocean to get *amrita* or ambrosia. The temple contains the usual phallic emblem of Siva and consists of the shrine and an open hall or *mandapa* with an entrance porch before it facing east.



TEMPLE OF NILAKANTHA MAHADEVA AT SUNAK

The *sikhara* is complete and the roof of the *mandapa* and the porch are also intact. The structure thus affords an almost complete example of the temple architecture of medieval Gujarat. The construction of its dome is also typical. The interior of it is richly carved. The projecting brackets carved with various figures, human as well as conventional or fantastic, are made with great skill. The decorative mouldings on the outside of the sculptures which are Saiva in character are all skilfully cut and would lead the spectator to remark that the older a carving is, the more artistic it seems to be. This temple appears to be older than the one described above. The construction of the roof of its hall is worth study, along with that of some Hindu temples in *Konkan*.

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# RAJPUTANA

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## Pushkar

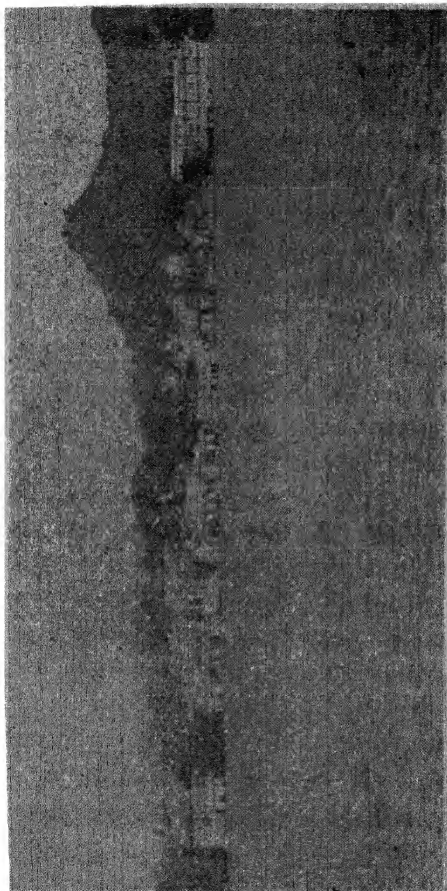
**P**USHKAR is a noted place of pilgrimage situate in the Ajmer district of Rajputana. It contains a magnificent lake and a temple sacred to Brahma. As temples to Brahma are rare, this shrine is specially important and attracts innumerable pilgrims from all over India.

How the lake became sacred to Brahma is the subject of an interesting legend. Brahma, it is said, once performed a big yaga on this spot. In order to protect himself and the sacrifice from being disturbed by the demons, he is said to have raised four huge mountains and placed guards over them. Brahma, in spite of his great preparations, forgot to bring his wife Goddess Saraswathi with him. Finding that the preparations had already well advanced and the yaga could not be stopped, he engaged one of the Apsaras to take her place and performed this yaga. Saraswati, on turning up, was filled with indignation and retired to a

mountain where, the legend says, she was transformed into a stream. A bath in the Pushkar lake is said to confer the benefit of Brahma's yaga and entitles to the bliss of Heaven.

The Pushkar lake lies in the midst of sand mounds with a few hills in the distance. The lake appears to have been excavated by one of the kings of Mundore. He was returning one day after a hot chase in the forests and seeing a fountain of water on the spot, rushed and washed his hands therein. He was delighted with the spot and soon excavated the historic lake. Other Rajput kings and men of wealth soon followed suit and patronised the spot. The Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur are said to have been the keenest devotees. These kings and other pious men soon began to fill the banks of the lake with temples and the places of royal residence which exist and add greatly to the beauty of the lake. Some of them are to be found in the midst of the waters, constructed when the bed was dry.

The town contains fine temples dedicated to Brahma, Savitri, Badri Narayan, Varaha,



**PUSHKAR: THE LOTUS LAKE OF RAJPUTANA**

The romance of Pushkar, its surrounding hills with temple of Savitri on the peak of one of them.

and Siva Atmatesvara. They are all of modern construction. A writer describes the temple to Brahma thus: "We find a fine big temple richly built of marble, situated on the summit of a mound overlooking the lake where Brahma is regularly worshipped. It stands in a small courtyard, surrounded by buildings in which live the priests. In front of the temple are two marble elephants and a few well-executed statues."

The pilgrims visit the lake almost every day. Brahman priests abound who offer their services to the pilgrims. But the most important season is October-November when a great mela is held in which a hundred thousand pilgrims take part and bathe in the sacred waters of the lake. The whole city of Pushkar is considered sacred and no living thing is allowed to be put to death here, even as in Nathdwara, the great Vaishnava city of Rajasthan.

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## Ujjain

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**M**ODERN UJJAIN or Avantika of ancient tradition is one of the seven sacred cities whose names occur in the daily devotions of the pious Hindu. The other six cities, which are reputed to have the gift of *Moksha*, are: Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kasi, Kanchi and Dwaravati. Legend and history alike have enriched and sanctified Avantika or the "seed city" so called because "the germs of all living beings are supposed to have survived the Flood preserved in the central image of Mahadeo in the great Mahakal temple".

Tradition endows the city with 3000 years of prehistoric glory. It is the beloved city of the poet Kalidasa "who sang of its golden spires, learned Brahmans and beautiful women". But even within historic times it has played a decisive part as the capital of Malwa. It was the seat of Asoka's viceroyalty. Aurangzeb and

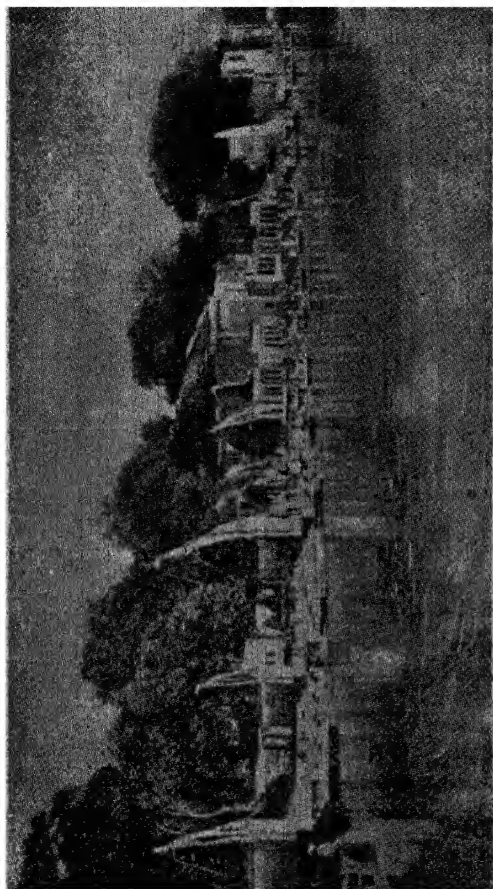


his brother Dara fought in its neighbourhood in 1658. It was taken and burnt by Holkar in 1792. It remained the capital of Sindia till 1810 when Daulat Rao Sindia removed his residence to Gwalior.

Ujjain has been the (Greenwich) of India from time immemorial. It was here too that Sri Krishna and his brother Balarama learnt their first lessons in astronomy. The present observatory was built by Maharaja Jai Singh.

The famous temple of Mahakal in Ujjain is one of the most important centres of Shinte worship. In 1235, it was wrecked by Altamish, who carried off to his capital the famous gem-studded idol of Mahakal from which, according to Shinte belief, "the world was re-stocked after the flood with human, animal and plant life". The temple now standing was rebuilt on its ancient site by Ramachandra, Dewan of the Peshwa, 500 years later.

Pilgrims to the shrine of Mahakal make it a point to have a dip in the sacred Sipra river at the Ramghat. The water is kept pure. Every effort is made to preserve the sacred water from pollution.



BATHING GHATS ON THE RIVER SIPRA AT UJJAIN

A beautiful feature of Ujjain and its neighbourhood is the sanctity attached to birds and beasts, and fish and all living creatures. The fish and the turtles of the Sipra river, says Mrs. Harding, have been under the special protection of successive Buddhist, Jain and Hindu dynasties. "In consequence, the banks of the Sipra are haunted by wild peacocks and many other birds, and the waters of the river here probably show more turtles to the square yard than may be found anywhere else in the world."

Ujjain is also sacred to the memory of Sree Vallabhacharya, the great Vaishnava reformer, who took up his abode under a pipal tree on the banks of the Sipra which is still said to exist and designated as his baithak or station.

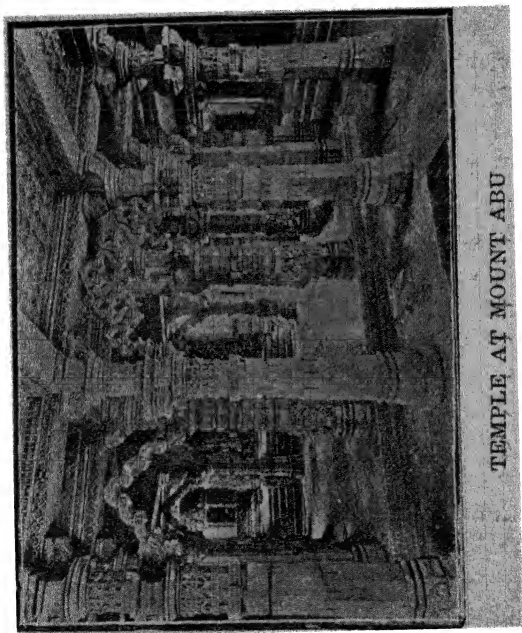
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## Mount Abu

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FIVE thousand feet above sea-level is Mount Abu, without doubt the most interesting and attractive hill-station within easy reach of Bombay. The Railway runs along the foot of the hill and an excellent motor road links it with Abu Road Railway Station on the B. B. and C. I. "The Rajput Olympus" as it is called, has all the amenities of modern life, and the pilgrim combines the pleasures of a mountaineering expedition with the interests of an archæological excursion. Its bracing climate and its picturesque scenery attract thousands of visitors every year, but the primary interests of the pilgrims are centered round the famous Dilwara temples. They are set among ideal surroundings hedged round by verdant hills. The temples, enclosed by high walls and protected by ante-chambers, "hide their beauty until the main quadrangles are reached when the sum-total of their loveliness bursts upon us and takes our breath away. Forests of

marble columns, carved and polished till they resemble Chinese ivories, are linked by *toranas* or flying arches that twist and twine from pillar to pillar like exquisite



TEMPLE AT MOUNT ABU

creepers, softening outlines and producing the effect of a symphony of graceful movements. The ceilings are adorned with

layer upon layer of carvings so ornate, so cunningly executed that the eye fails to grasp the marvels of the craftsmanship. In the centre of the domes are pendants so lengthy that they are almost detached from their background and are suggestive of heavy tassels of stiffest silken cord suspended by a single thread".

The temples, it is said, were built by Jains in honour of Admatte, the first Jain teacher and of Neminath the twenty-second Tirthankara. Built exclusively in marble, the delicacy of their detail and the appropriateness of ornament are held to be unsurpassed. The temple of Vimala Shah was built in the middle of the eleventh century and two centuries later came the Vastupala and Tejpala temples.

Not far from Dilawara is Achaleswar memorable for the imprint of Siva's toe. It is said that Siva thrust his foot through the earth from his shrine at Benares "so as to steady Mount Abu when it was a-wobble". The depth of this hole has never been plumbed, but it is assumed that it extends to *patal*, the lowest region of the earth.

The highest point in Mount Abu is the Hermit's Peak, whose summit is capped by a little Siva shrine in true Hindu fashion.

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## Nathdwara

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UNLIKE Mount Abu, Nathdwara is not distinguished by architectural excellence. Situated in the Mewar hills in Rajputana, it is the seat of the head of the Vaishnava cult. The temple of Shri Nathji which it enshrines is, perhaps, the richest temple in all India and it attracts Vaishnava pilgrims from far and near. It is reputed to have a fabulous income of Rs. 40 lakhs a year, while the temple properties include vast estates and buildings round about Nathdwara. The High Priest of the temple enjoys the right and the position of a first class nobleman of the State with full rights of administration within the territory.

The discovery and installation of Shri Nathji at Nathdwara is attributed to Shri Vallabacharya, the famous South Indian missionary of the fifteenth century. A native of the Telugu country, Vallabacharya was a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and reformer, who settled first at Muttra and

then at Benares and Ujjain and preached with great ardour the Vaishnava cult and philosophy. After extensive travels in the Himalayan valleys, he settled down in the groves of Brindaban.

While living here amidst the classic groves engaged in Vaishnavite devotion and studies, surrounded also, perhaps, by the few disciples he had by this time gathered, it is said that God Krishna appeared to him one day in his sleep and told him that he had become manifest in the Govardhana Hill under the name of Devadamana or Shri Nathji and that his attendants at the cow settlement when he became incarnate as Krishna had been born again, and added that Vallabha should come to see Him. Accordingly Vallabha and his disciples went, found an image of Devadamana or Shri Nathji and, duly constructing a temple, installed the image therein. Shri Nathji, it is said, further commanded Vallabha to propagate His worship, without which a man would not be admissible to the Pushtimarga or the path of Divine Grace. "The meaning of this legend



seems to be," as Sir Bhandarkar suggests, "that Vallabha connected his system with a special manifestation of Krishna known by the name of Shri Nathji "

This incident seems to have made a profound impression upon the followers of Vallabhacharya; for, in later times when his teachings had spread over Rajasthan, we find that it is one of the great themes with which the art and poetry of the country are preoccupied. In the collection of Rajput paintings recently published by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, a most beautiful painting portrays this historic event. In a background all covered with hills, representing Brindavana, Vallabhacharya is seen installing the image in the Govardhana Hill. Below on the left are two disciples, perhaps Telingana Brahmins in attitudes of devotion, and a servant with a bale of offerings for the new shrine. On the right are two Princes of Udaipur, of whom the foremost is no doubt Raj Singh, and two Gopis, or perhaps Princesses, with offerings of milk and curds. The foreground is occupied on the right and left by villages with a

temple on the right and two bathing tanks in the centre; one of the latter is surrounded by little *chatris* or stone pavilions. "The most beautiful figure is that of the foremost Brahman, a true *bhakta*, whose eyes are closed and hands outstretched in fervent adoration." The date of this event, the installation of Shri Nathji, is usually given as Samvat 1576 or A.D. 1520.

The temple, installed under such auspices by the great Acharya, has flourished through the centuries. The followers of this particular cult of Vaishnavas are among the wealthiest communities in Western and Central India. They include rich merchants of the Bhatia and Bania communities of Gujarat and Kathiawar and some of the princely families of Rajputana. It is said that on an average about a hundred pilgrims visit Nathdwara every day—a total of nearly 35,000 for the year—almost all of them drawn from the well-to-do classes who spend lavishly at the place of pilgrimage and add to the income of the temple through presents in cash and kind.

A distinguishing feature of the Shuddh-adwait, or Pushtimargiya, as it is more generally known among the Vaishnavas, a sect of Vaishnavism, is "the worldly way in which they worship the deity, which is feted, dressed and ornamented to the best of its votaries' ability".

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## Osia

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ONE of the oldest temples illustrating Jain architecture at its best is to be seen at Osia in Rajputana, thirty-two miles from Jodhpur. The temple of



### TEMPLE AT OSIA

Mahavira is ascertained to have been built in the time of Vatsaraja who flourished about 770-800 A.D.

## Udaipur

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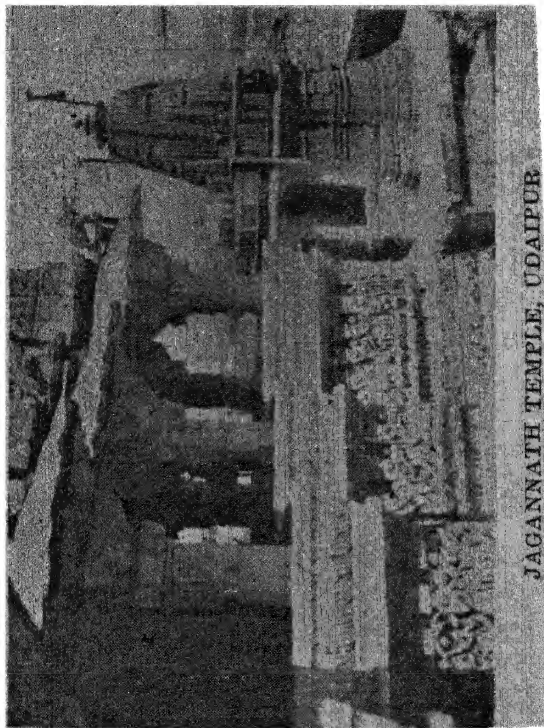
IF Rajputana is pre-eminently the land of chivalry and romance in Indian history, Udaipur "the City of Sunrise" typifies to perfection all the beauty and glory of medieval India. This particular spot of Rajputana (on the Udaipur-Chitorgarh line) has something of the charm of a fairy tale. What with the long cataract of marble terraces and halls falling into the waters of a mountain-encircled lake, the city has all the loveliness of an earthly paradise. The Maharana of Udaipur traces his descent direct from the Sun and is considered a sort of secular primate among all the rulers and nobles of Rajput origin.

The Maharana's capital, like Venice the "Queen of the Adriatic", is a city of palaces. 'Like its European prototype, Udaipur creates a longing to laze, to lounge, to day-dream. To row from one palace to another, to stroll amidst gardens that would do honour to a fairyland, to drive in an enchanted forest, and, last but

by no means least—to watch the sun set over the Pichola Lake and tint the Maharana's Palace with a colour symphony irreproducible, indescribable—time flies in such gentle and genial occupations—and each day “Udaipur the Coy” reveals some new unsuspected beauty, unveils some fresh charm.’

Udaipur is no less a city of temples than of palaces, and the sanctuaries on the Pichola Lake are unforgettably impressive.

The sight of the Gangour Ghat suggests the great spring festival when the image of the goddess Gangour clad in gold, silver and precious stones is ensconced on a sumptuous throne close to the lake. The procession of boats in which the Maharana and his suite participate, the multifarious beauty of the garb assumed in honour of this fete by the fairest city in India baffle both the brush of the artist and the pen of the author. Like everything else at Udaipur, the great Jagannath or Jagadish temple is set on a hill-side. Built by Maharana Jagat Singh I. (1628-1658), its bold structure is a delight to the archæologist and “if we could come to grips with carving of the best, we should examine the plinth,



JAGANNATH TEMPLE, UDAIPUR

piled high, packed tight warehouse-fashion with row upon row of figures executed by artists, who could have beaten miniaturists at their own game in the skilful reproduction of detail". Despite the injuries effected by the Mughals under Aurangzeb (1658-1707) in the course of the Rajput war when portions of the facade were damaged by explosives, the surviving ornamentation is worthy of minute investigation—so is the bronze Garuda or sacred bird in a shrine opposite the entrance to the main building. The temples, too, at the corners of the court-yard, dedicated respectively to the Sun, Devi, Ganesh and Siva are of distinctive interest and "the fact that it is a state-maintained sanctuary, filled with devotees all day and every day, lends to this place of worship a vitality, conspicuous by its absence in temples seldom or never used".

The temple of Eklingji, about fourteen miles distant from Udaipur, was constructed about the year 728 A.D. by Bapa Rawal, the founder of the Rana line. The motor road is good and the scenery magnificent. The original temple was

destroyed by the Muslims and the present elaborate building dates only from the fifteenth century. The design is uncommon and extremely effective with a double-storeyed porch surmounted by a pyramidal roof and a lofty and peculiarly ornate tower over the sanctuary proper. The shrine contains a black marble image of Mahadeva of immense worth, while at a moderate estimate the great lingam, encircled with a graven serpent studded with diamonds, is valued at a lakh and a half of rupees.

The famous French traveller, Pierre Loti, has left us a picture of the temple on a gala day, which is as true to-day as it was in his time. "The temple is as white as newly fallen snow. The temple court-yard was crowded with merchants, whose baskets were filled to overflowing with garlands of white and yellow jasmin interspersed with roses. . . . The people of Brahma passed before me ascending and descending the temple steps between the great stone elephants with trunks upraised that mount guard. All the men were in white, with sabres in their belts and rows of flowers in tiers



about their necks. There were veterans who, with snow-white beards brushed upwards *a la Rajput*, looked more like old white cats than human beings. There were many tiny children with mien grave and dignified, for all that their legs were scarce long enough to mount the stairs. Each mite wore a sort of velvet tiara embroidered in gold. The women were marvellous, enveloped, according to the fashion of antiquity, in multi-coloured muslins with golden designs or in black draperies with silver stars . . . . . Before ascending, each person stooped and kissed the lowest step. Similarly, on top, before departing from the shadow of sanctity, every devotee turned back at the doorway to make obeisance and kiss the threshold."

The Jain temple of Rakhabdeo (vrish-badeva) is connected with Udaipur by a 42-mile motor road, also a regular motor service. This is one of the most important Jain pilgrimages in India and the image is worshipped by all sects of Jains and others.

Even in an account of the shrines and temples, we cannot forget the cenotaphs of the Maharanas—so full of memories of

the glory and greatness of Udaipur enshrined in magnificent memorials. Only a couple of miles from the city is Arh or Ahar studded with what are called the splendid *chhatris*. With their wealth of white marble, these *chhatris* are quite as arresting as any monument in Genoa's famous Campo Santo, and rival the latter in quantity as well as in quality. As Fergusson put it: "The tombs exist literally in hundreds of all sizes, from the little domical canopy supported by four columns to the splendid *chhatri* whose octagonal dome is supported by fifty-six. . . . All are crowned by domes and all make more or less pretensions to architectural beauty; while as they are grouped together as accident dictated, and interspersed with noble trees, it would be difficult to point out a more beautiful cemetery anywhere."

Amidst the Maharanas' cenotaphs are some interesting Sati stones commemorating the wives and slave girls who, according to ancient rite and custom, laid down their lives and were burnt upon the death of their lords.

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## AMRITSAR

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**A**MRITSAR, the holy town of the Sikhs, is world-known. It represents no ancient sacred site. It was a creation of the Sikh religion and sprang from the desire and necessity for a common centre of worship and a rallying point for the growing community of the Sikhs.

Nanak preached and died at Khartarpur. His two successors, Guru Angad, who earned his livelihood by yarn work and Guru Amar Das, a humble Khatri who, along with his apostolic work, laboured as a carrier of goods, had no fixed residence and erected no place of worship. The fourth Guru, Ram Das, was a man of greater culture and was endowed with a creative mind. In his time the offerings of his followers amounted to a large sum; the Guru was enabled to live in great state. At Lahore, he had an interview with the Emperor Akbar, who was so impressed with the Guru's piety and

character that as a mark of esteem, he granted him a circular piece of land. Guru Ram Das immediately restored an old tank therein, which he renamed Amritsagar (pool of immortality) and began the construction of a temple in its midst. The followers of the Guru began to settle and build temples and houses round about the tank and thus arose the historic sacred city of the Sikhs.

A legendary story is also told as to the sacredness of the tank and the miraculous powers of healing its water possessed. In the time of Guru Ram Das, there lived in the district a wealthy man with five daughters. He wanted to marry them to rich suitors. The youngest of them was of an unworldly mind and passed her life in spiritual meditation neglecting everything else in life. The father, to spite her, married her to a miserable leper and cripple and sent her unceremoniously out of the house. The girl, unshaken in mind, loved the husband chosen for her, carried him, cripple as he was, on her head in a wicker basket wherever she went and faithfully tended him. One day she deposited her

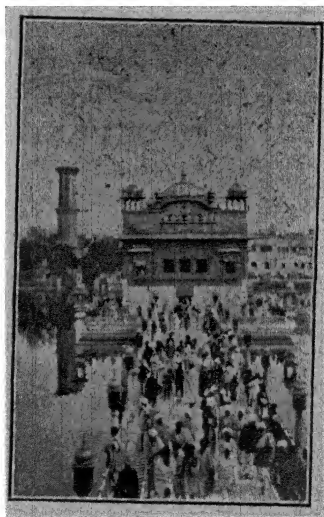
basket on the ground near the pool of water (which became Amritsar) and went to the Guru's free kitchen to procure food for him. The husband somehow managed to crawl to the water's edge and have a bath therein when his body underwent a wonderful transformation. He became a strong and fine-looking man to the delight of his devoted wife.

The Golden Temple is situated over half a mile from the railway station of Amritsar. The sacred tank is 510 feet square surrounded by quadrangular walls lined with marble-faced chapels (or bungahs). A white marble causeway leads from the west side of the tank to the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple). There is an imposing arch, the Darshani Darwaja, flanked by gilded standard lamps at the place where the marble causeway begins.

The Darbar Sahib is a square structure built upon a platform 67 feet square. The lower portion of the temple is of white marble to some 6 feet and above it the walls are plated with gilded copper. There are four door-ways on all the four sides to the temple, all plated with finely

wrought silver. The domes and cupolas of the temple are plated with gold; hence the name.

The fifth Guru, Arjun, who completed the construction of the Golden Temple,



GOLDEN TEMPLE

when told that it should be higher than buildings in the neighbourhood, replied: "No, what is humble shall be exalted" and, so saying, constructed a flight of ten steps to lead down to the temple and

made it the lowest edifice of all. The temple was constructed with four door-ways to symbolise the fact that the Sikh worship was open to all.

The object of worship in the temple is a copy of the sacred book of the Sikhs—the Adi Granth. Here before the book sit Sikh priests perpetually chanting hymns and passages from it. The Sikh pilgrims enter, pray and depart in unending streams and, in return for the offerings of money they make, get sweetmeats (Karahprasad) and cups of sugar (Kujamisri) from the priests.

The upper floor of the temple is a miniature Hall of Mirrors and is said to have been the place where the Gurus used to sit and meditate.

The temple has a treasure-house located in the gateway already mentioned, the Darshani Darwaza. The treasure-house is called Toshakhana and is located in the upper chamber of the Darwaza; the way to it lies through massive silver doors and a stair-case. The treasures belonging to the temple and lodged therein are a pankah, 2 chakris, a canopy of pure gold weighing 10lbs. set with rubies and

diamonds, a gold pendant, a magnificent diadem set with diamonds and having pearl pendants, once worn by the grandson of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, Nan Nihal Singh, and a coloured plan of the temple.

Other important buildings near the Golden Temple are: (1) the Baba Atal Tower, and (2) the Akal Takht or the "Immortal Throne. The former is a tower of nine storeys and 131 feet in height. It was erected in memory of Baba Atal, the seven-year old son of Guru Har Govind, the 6th Guru. The boy was possessed, it is said, of supernatural powers and once brought back to life a playmate bitten to death by a snake. The Guru, his father, rebuked him saying that "Gurus should display their powers in purity of doctrine and holiness of living" and not in the performance of miracles. Taking these words to heart, the tender boy lay down by the Kaulsar tank and died.

The Akal Takht is situated opposite the Darshani Darwaza. It is the place where those newly converted to Sikhism go



through a kind of initiation ceremony. The Granth Sabib in the Golden Temple is brought every night to this place for safe custody.

Amritsar is also noted for certain other Gurudwaras (Sikh places of worship) which all have become historically famous, as the sites where bloody battles were fought between Sikh and Moslem armies.

Amritsar, unlike other North Indian cities, possesses very many beautiful and extensive gardens which add greatly to the pleasure and loveliness of the Sikh sacred city. The most delightful is the Ram Bagh. It was brought into existence by Maharajah Ranjit Singh. There was an old fort on the site; the Maharajah had the mud fortifications removed and had a beautiful garden laid out with swimming pools and a summer palace. Another is Guruka-Bagh about 30 acres in extent, containing many large fruit trees, and situated directly to the south of the Golden Temple. The third important one is the Jallianwallah Bagh (of evil fame on account of the tragedy that occurred in it recently).

There is a great Sikh shrine at Taran Taran, 14 miles south of Amritsar on a branch railway. It was the residence of the fifth Guru Arjun and has gained much fame as many thousands of lepers are said to have been cured by bathing in its tank.

Amritsar lies on the direct Railway line between Lahore and Delhi, 300 miles from the latter.

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# DELHI

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**D**ELHI, the capital and leading city of Muslim India, is probably one of the most historic towns of the world. It has seen more vicissitudes and tragic changes than almost any other capital city of the world. It has witnessed numerous invasions and battles. It has been built and rebuilt several times. It has again been made the capital city of India by the British and bids fair to become under their auspices a city of peace and progress and national harmony.

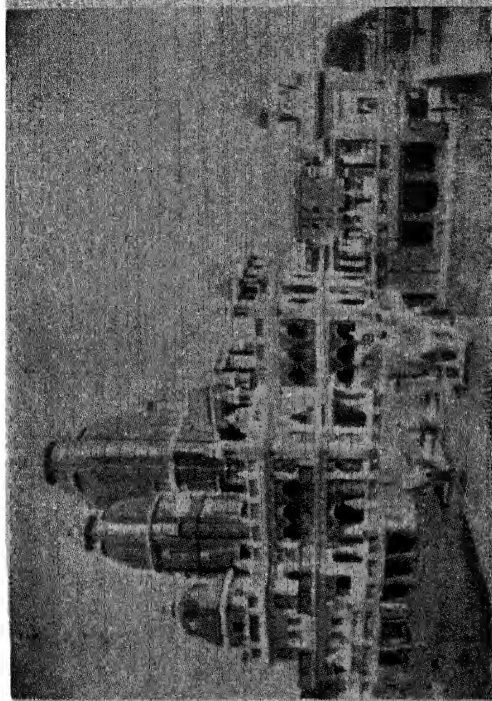
The original city of Delhi, it may be mentioned, was built by a Hindu king, the Rajput chief Anangapal, in the 11th century. His successors did not rule over it long but yielded it to the Muslim invaders, who from the 12th century onwards have made it their capital whence to rule and dominate the whole of Hindustan. Kutbud-din, the first Muslim ruler of Delhi, built a great mosque, the Quwat-ul-Islam, on the ruins of 27 idol-temples. The Muslim rulers.

had chosen to enrich the city with fanes to their faith, the most celebrated one being the Mosque, the Jumma Masjid, built by Shah Jahan. It is one of the largest mosques in the world with a dome 201 feet high, flanked by two high minarets, each 130 feet high with three gateways and a magnificent flight of steps. The faith of the Hindu masses was never much encouraged till our own enlightened times.

The credit of having built in the old and historic city two great temples to the deities of the two great religions of India—Hinduism and Buddhism—belongs to the charitable merchant prince Sri Seth Raja Baldeo Das Birla.

Of the two temples, the Lakshmi Narayana temple provides a place of worship for all the sects of the Hindus including Harijans. The temples are said to have been built in the style of architecture prevalent in the ancient times of Asoka and Chandragupta and are said to compare very favourably with the style of well known South Indian temples. The temples contain numerous beautiful paintings and bas

reliefs. A novel feature has been added—inscriptions of verses and sayings from the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita, Mahabharata and the Ramayana as well as from the compositions of the famous poets and saints of India—Guru Nanak, Kabir, Tulsi Das, Mira Bai, Ravi Das the cobbler, Sri Narsing Mehta and others. The idols of Sri Lakshmi Narayana and other deities are made in marble and are said to be very beautiful. The temples themselves, it may be mentioned, have been built on modern lines with reinforced concrete, not of stone or granite as in olden times. The domes, *sikharas*, pillars, floors, staircases, etc., have all been done in steel and cement and make the temples most unique specimens of this kind known to India and have cost four lakhs of rupees. The temples were opened on 18th March, 1939, by Mahatma Gandhi amidst intense religious enthusiasm and fervour displayed by a large concourse of Hindus from various parts. Renowned pandits of Benares and Delhi performed the consecration ceremony of the Sri Lakshmi Narayana temple. A *nagar kirtan* procession was taken out and on a modest



LUXMI NARAIN TEMPLE AND BUDDHA TEMPLE, NEW DELHI

estimate more than a lakh of Hindus of all castes and sects is said to have taken part in the procession. Never before has old Delhi witnessed such a moving and historic scene. The long procession of kirtan and bhajan parties of volunteers and scouts, followed by two palanquins carrying the images of Lakshmi and Vishnu Bhagwan and a golden palanquin containing the Vedas was a most memorable sight in the city of the Muslim Emperors.

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## KURUKSHETRA

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THE sacred Kurukshetra lies on the Delhi-Ambala line (N.-W. Railway) at a distance of 97 miles north of Delhi. This is said to be the great and mythical city founded by the Pandavas of Epic fame. The place contains numerous *thirthas* (holy bathing-places), Thaneswar, Saraswathi thirtha, Sthanusaram, Banaganga, etc. Kurukshetra is most famous for the fairs (*melas*) held at the time of Solar Eclipses. A bath in the tanks of Kurukshetra at the time of the Solar Eclipse is considered supremely holy, and immense crowds of pilgrims gather on its occurrence. Here, in Kurukshetra, was fought the greatest battle of antiquity—the Mahabharata War—which has been enshrined in popular religion and legend for over 5,000 years. It was a war between the Kauravas, the hundred sons of the blind king Dhritarashtra of Hastinapur, led by his eldest son the wicked Duryodhana, and the five sons of Pandu, brother of Dhritarashtra, led



by Yudhisthira the just, eldest of the Pandavas. The story of the great war is told in the Epic of the Mahabharata. It was before the commencement of this great battle when Arjuna, the Pandava hero, refused to fight against his own kith and kin that Sri Krishna expounded his great message of duty embodied in the matchless songs of the Bhagavad Gita or The Lord's Song. On the eve of the battle, Arjuna is assailed by tormenting thoughts that he may have to kill his nearest and dearest relatives. And what good is it, he asks, to purchase victory at such a price. Sri Krishna, on the other hand, goads him on to fight the aggressor without hatred, without passion, his mind steadfast on the duty of the Kshatriya king to uphold the Dharma at any cost. Sri Krishna argues: He must have no hatred towards his brothers, no passion for destruction. In any case he cannot kill their souls, he can only kill their bodies and that is the least important. If then without hatred and without covetous attachment to the things of this world, he fights and kills, not only will he be without sin but also.

his victory over those who fight on a lower plane is assured.

Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth  
the spirit for ever ;

Death hath not touched it at all dead though  
the house of it seems !

Who knoweth it exhaustless, self-sustained,

Immortal, indestructible,—Shall such  
Say : I have killed a man, or caused to kill ?

—(*The Song Celestial.*)

Thus, as a writer in the *Indian Review* describes, every tribe and chief of fame assembled at Kurukshetra—and for eighteen days the battle raged fast and furious. Myriads were slain “for the father knew not the son, nor the disciple the preceptor”. In the end, the Pandavas emerged victorious, but victory brought them no happiness. The almost complete destruction of the Lunar race of kings disgusted them and they determined to withdraw from the world. They placed Parikshit, a grandson of Arjuna, on the throne of Hastinapur and themselves retired with Lord Krishna to his capital Dwaraka, whence they proceeded to the Himalayas and perished in the snows.

Kurukshetra has since witnessed many a battle that has changed the fortunes of empires and dynasties in India. For Panipet, 42 miles north of Kurukshetra, has through the centuries held a unique record for decisive battles in Indian history—battles as momentous as Marathon or Thermopolae on which hinged the fate of empires in Europe.

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# KASHMIR

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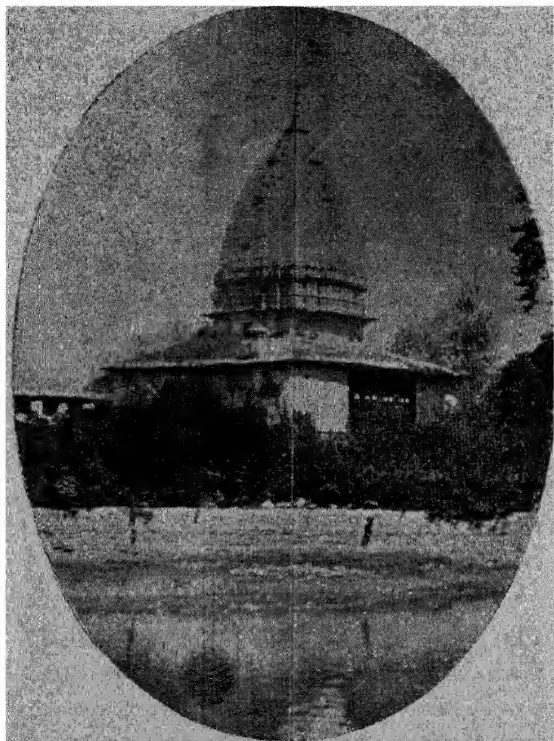
## Srinagar

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**T**HE two great temples for which Kashmir is noted are situate near Srinagar. The one is the famous Martanda temple—temple to the Sun-God—about 3 miles east of Islamabad. The other is the temple to Vishnu as Surya at Payech, some 19 miles from Srinagar.

The Martanda temple was built by the great Kashmiri, king, Lalitaditya, in the eighth century A.D. It is dedicated to the Sun and is one of the rarest temples of its kind in India. The temple has now no roof or tower and no image, both of which are said to have been destroyed by the Mahomedan invaders.

This temple to the Sun stands in the midst of a quadrangle surrounded by a colonnade of 84 pillars. The central

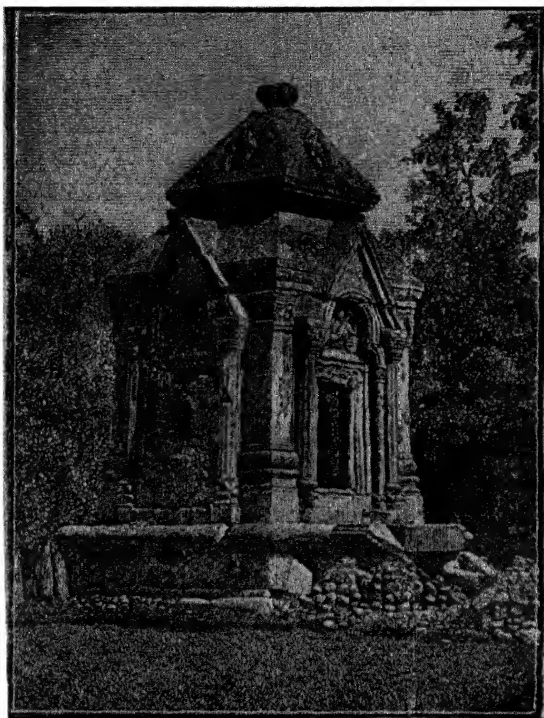


THE TEMPLE IN THE CHENAR BAGH,  
SRINAGAR

temple consists of a sanctuary, an antarala and a mantapa. The sanctuary and its wings now stand bare, but they should have once been surmounted by towers, probably pyramidal in shape, like other temples of this age. The pillars, niches, door-ways, friezes, cornices and entablatures of this temple should have been specimens of exquisite workmanship.

The Martanda temple is built on the slope of a hill and its setting gives it a special grandeur.

The Payech temple lies in a village about 6 miles from the left bank of the Jhelum river. Unlike the Martanda temple, this temple is in a good state of preservation and is one of the most entire examples of the style. It appears to have been built in the tenth century. Quasi-classical bases and capitals, the pediment resting on the pillars over the door, double and triple roofs sloping to four sides make up a peculiar style that we do not find anywhere outside Kashmir. The temple has been thus described in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XV, page 98: "On the south side of the village situated in



TEMPLE AT PAYECH, KASHMIR

a small green space near the bank of the stream surrounded by a few walnut and willow trees, stands an ancient temple, which in intrinsic beauty and elegance of outline is superior to all the existing remains in Kashmir of similar dimensions. Its excellent preservation may probably be explained by its retired situation. . . . and by the marvellous solidity of its construction. The cell, which is 8 feet square and has an open door-way on each of the four sides, is composed of only ten stones the four corners being each a single stone, the sculptured tympanums over the door-ways and four others, while two more compose the pyramidal roof, the lower being an enormous mass, 8 ft. square by 4 feet in height. It has been ascribed by Sir Alexander Cunningham on grounds which, in the absence of any positive authority either way, may be taken as adequate, to Narendraditya who reigned from 488 to 490. Fergusson, however, considered that the temple belongs to the thirteenth century. The sculptures over the door-ways are coarsely executed in comparison with the



artistic finish of the purely architectural details and are much defaced, but apparently represent Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and the Goddess Durga. The building is said to be dedicated to Vishnu as Surya or the Sun-god. Inside, the cupola is rayed so as to represent the Sun, and at each corner of the square, the space intervening between the angle and the line of the circle is filled up with a jinn or attendant who seems to be sporting at the edge of its rays. . . . . The interior is still occupied by a large stone lingam."

Kashmiri architecture was considerably influenced by the architecture of the monasteries of the Gandhara country in the neighbourhood of Peshawar, which formed part of the Greek kingdom of Bactria. Hence, as Mr. Yakub Hasan points out in his *Temples, Churches and Mosques* "under the triple influence of Greek, Persian and Indian art, the decorative sculpture assumed those forms and styles that were exuberantly rich in their variety"

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## Amarnath

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**A**MARNATH is a holy place in the Himalayas lying roughly at 80 miles' distance from Srinagar. It contains a huge cave sacred to Siva, where exists a Sivalinga naturally formed of ice. It attracts innumerable pilgrims in spite of the dangers that beset this journey every year.

The yatra to the sacred cave is usually performed in the month of Sravana (July-August). The Kashmir State within whose dominions the holy place lies, are now taking excellent measures to protect the pilgrims during the arduous journey. Special coolies are posted throughout the way. A set of officials, including a magistrate and a doctor, with a moving dispensary, accompany the pilgrims. High officers of State too take part in the initiation of the yatra, and sometimes even perform the full journey to the sacred cave along with the pilgrims. These arrangements do credit to the State and

have greatly minimised the risks and accidents that used to attend old yatras.

The journey from Srinagar to Amarnath lies through majestic and bewitching scenery. The winding path along the edge of the mountains, the snow clad hills, the beautiful mountain streams that murmur along the path, the bracing Himalayan air and the delightful springs in the various places on the way—all make a lasting impression on the pilgrim and more than compensate for the troubles of the journey. The first stage—a length of 61 miles from Srinagar to Pahalgam—is now covered by a metalled road. Pahalgam is at an altitude of 7,200 feet above sea-level. It is a pleasant place to rest in. It is in the form of a meadow encircled by high mountains. Two rivers Kolahal and Seshanag join here. Beyond Pahalgam, the way lies for 18 miles along the course of the Seshanag river. The next resting place is called Chandanwarri, 9 miles from Pahalgam. The place is full of wild flowers and birch trees, and there is said to be also a snow bridge over the Seshanag river at this place.

The way further up consists of an ascent for about a mile and a half and a journey of five miles along the edge of an abyss till one reaches the Seshanag lake. The lake is a large one surrounded on three sides by mountains covered by perennial snow. Cascades, big and small, perpetually flow from the mountains into this lake which is five miles long and two miles broad.

A little further up lies Panchaharni, a beautiful place where five rivers flow as the name implies. Another ascent and descent and a walk on ice for a distance of some 2 or 3 miles finally leads one to the holy cave of Amarnath.

A writer in a North Indian journal thus describes the holy Amarnath and its surroundings.

"On both sides of it (Amarnath) there are huge mountains, Kailash and Bhairo, of which the construction is quite different from others. They look as though made of iron and on the top they are broken as if once bombarded. They have an air of awfulness about them and from their

top innumerable springs fall down of which the water is as thick and white as milk."

As regards the cave and the image, he says:

"The length of the Amarnath cave is 50 feet, breadth 55 and the height at the centre about 45 feet and the rock is made of gypsum. The whole of the cave leaks from above and at one place the water freezes and of itself an ice-image of Shivalingam has been formed which increases and decreases (grows and waxes) with the moon. It completes on the day of Purnima (full moon) and entirely disappears on the Amavasya. The colour of the ice has a peculiarity of its own; it is more or less green and very brilliant. It is rather puzzling how the snow image is formed and how it increases and decreases with the moon. It is a mystery which has not as yet been explained successfully by any scientist."

A pair of pigeons too is seen inside the cave. Tradition says that it has been living there from time immemorial.

An awful silence broods over the place and nothing except huge mountains, ice, mountain-streams and the sacred cave, with an ice-image and a pair of pigeons inside it is seen and they are all so thought-inspiring. One's soul is face to face, as it were, with God.

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# UNITED PROVINCES

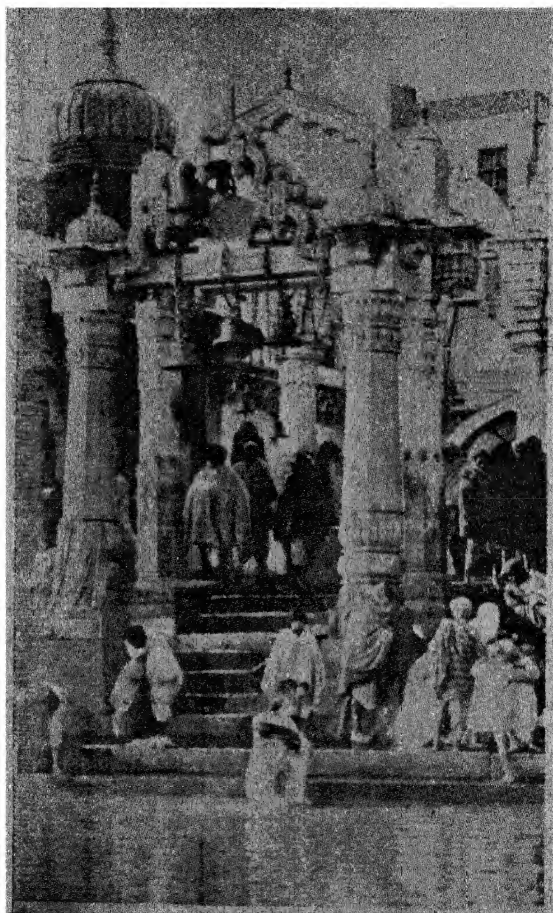
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## Muttra

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**M**UTTRA, headquarters of the district of the same name in the United Provinces, lies on the railway line between Agra and Delhi. It is one of the most holy places of Hindu India, being associated with the birth and exploits of Shri Krishna, the most loved and widely adored avatar of Vishnu. The town lies on the right bank of the Jumna and is set in very picturesque surroundings. The broad river, the continuous line of ghats rising from the water's edge, the beautiful temples and houses that fill the road along the ghats, the wide streets and flat-roofed houses of the city—all make Muttra an ideal pilgrim-centre.

The city derives its sanctity from very ancient times. It is said to have been founded by Shatrughna, brother of Sri Rama. It contained the hermitage of



A TEMPLE ON THE JUMNA AT MUTTRA

many a holy sage, Dhruva and others. In historic times, it was a great centre of Buddhistic and Jain culture. After the expulsion of Saka Satraps under whose aegis Buddhism flourished, it again became a sacred place of the Hindus. During the 15th and 16th centuries when the Vaishnava movement was at its highest in Northern India, Muttra became the centre of all the great Vaishnava sects, and among them the Sri Vaishnavas of South India may be noted also and most of the present buildings and temples date from that period.

Muttra suffered largely at the hands of the Mahomedans in the Middle Ages. Mahomedan historians always refer to the city as a seat of idolatry to be destroyed. Mahomed of Ghazni sacked it in 1018-19. Sultan Sikandar Lody in 1500 destroyed all its temples and images. Shah Jehan too appointed a governor to stamp out idolatry in Muttra. Finally, Aurangzib had its many temples destroyed and built a mosque on the site of Kesava temple said to have been the most beautiful temple in Muttra. The indefatigable zeal of subsequent



generations, and the piety of Maratha and Rajput Chiefs, have again filled the city with temples and beautiful buildings which to-day make up the pilgrim city.

Dwarakadhish temple is the largest temple at present in Muttra. It is dedicated to Sri Krishna. Elaborate ceremonial worship is performed every day in this temple. Raslila performances are given here on Ekadashi evenings. A great festival is held in the month of Shravan (June-July) when thousands of pilgrims attend. The other important temples are: Keshava Deva Mandir, temples to Gopinath, Devaki, Thakore Keshori Raman, and Mathureh Govardhannath.

Of the twenty-four sacred bathing-ghats, two important ones may be mentioned: Vishram Ghat and Dhruva Ghat, the latter being the spot where Dhruva after great penance was vouchsafed the vision of Lord Vishnu and blessed with immortality by Him. Sri Krishna's actual place of nativity is now marked by a temple built and dedicated to him. There is a well near this temple with the water of which

Krishna's mother is said to have washed the Divine Baby's clothes. The well is known as Patala Kunda and is resorted to by pilgrims for purificatory bath.

A huge mound near Muttra is shown as the place where Kamsa held the wrestling matches and where Sri Krishna put Kamsa to death.

Govardhan Hill, where Sri Krishna performed the miracle of lifting a mountain to give protection to the cowherds and cattle, lies 18 miles from Muttra. There are several thirthas (sacred bathing-places) and a temple known as Haridev temple in it.

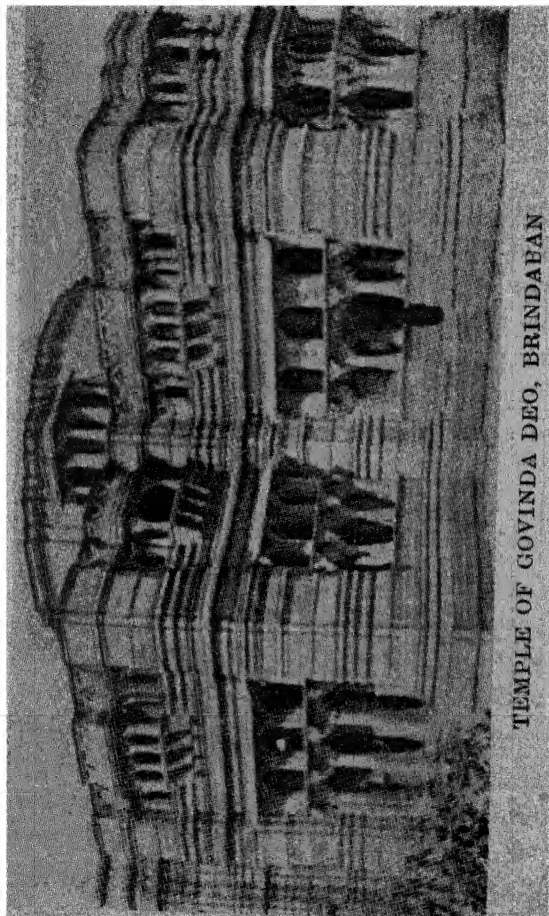
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## Brindaban

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**B**RINDABAN lies at some distance from the Jumna and is connected with Muttra by a branch railway. Brindaban represents the holy forest—the “forest of Brinda” wherein Sri Krishna sported. Krishna's child-life, his sports among the cowherds, his wondrous music with his flute, his various miracles and sportive actions all portrayed in Bhagavatha Purana, have this Brindaban for their background.

Brindaban has numerous temples said to number 1,000 and is surrounded by beautiful forests and pleasure-spots. The most famous of the present temples of Brindaban is the Govinda Deva Mandir, built by Raja Man Singh in 1590. It is a magnificent temple constructed of red sandstone and contains fine sculptures. A noteworthy temple is the Ranganath Mandir, built in the last century by rich merchants of Madras. It is in South Indian style with a gopura and other Dravidian architectural features. It has got a fine gold pillar in its



TEMPLE OF GOVINDA DEO, BRINDABAN

compound. Its festivals are carried on in South Indian fashion with a Car festival.

Other temples are : Gopinath Mandir, built in red sandstone at the same time as the Govinda Deva Mandir; Madan Mohan Mandir with a beautiful image of Krishna; Banki Bihari Mandir, built in white stone possessing a splendid gateway; Seva Kunja temple situated in a dense forest with romantic surroundings; Shahji Mandir, built in Muslim style and said to resemble the Taj Mahal; Radha Mohan Mandir, built by the followers of Chaitanya of Bengal, with a charming image of Sri Krishna in Saligram stone.

There is a Siva temple also in Brindaban, known as Gopeswar Mahadev. It is said that no Hindu should leave Brindaban without worshipping at this Siva shrine.

The best time for *darshans* of Brindaban temples is the rainy season, the month of Shrawan, when pilgrims from all parts of the country swarm the streets of Brindaban, the abode of Sri Krishna's early gambols and miracles.

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## Hardwar

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**H**ARDWAR, literally means the door-way to reach Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the Hindus. This ancient place of pilgrimage in the Saharanpur District in U. P. is equally important as the pilgrimage route to many sacred shrines on the Himalayas. From here the pilgrim wends his way to Kedarnath and Badrinath. Hardwar was once called Kapila after the sage of that name who is said to have lived here. Mahomedan historians refer to it as Gangadwara "the gate of the Ganges". Worshippers of Siva derive it from Hara, a name of Siva, while Vaishnavas claim that the correct origin of the name is from Hari, a name of Vishnu. Whatever it is, the town which is beautifully situated on the right bank of the Ganges, is a pilgrim centre for all Hindus.

On the opposite shore rises the hill of Chandi Pahar, whose summit is crowned by a temple. The Ganges here divides itself into many shallow branches with wooded islands between. At the present day the

great object of attraction is the bathing-ghat called Hari-ka-charan (Vishnu's footprint) with the adjoining temple of Gangadwara. A stone on the wall of the ghat, we are told, bears the footmark which is an object of special reverence. Pilgrims struggle to be the first to plunge into the pool on great occasions and stringent regulations are made to avoid rush and accidents. A great assemblage of pilgrims is held annually on the first day of the month of Baisakh, the commencement of the Hindu solar year. Every twelfth year, the occasion is considered one of special sanctity and a great fair—the Kumbha Mela—is being held to commemorate the occasion when thousands and thousands of pilgrims flock to this place. The gathering of vast concourse of people naturally affects the health of the pilgrims and attempts have been made by Government and public bodies to ensure better sanitary arrangements. The Hardwar Improvement Society, supported by contributions from Hindus all over the country, has taken upon itself the arduous task of regulating and helping the pilgrims in all possible ways.

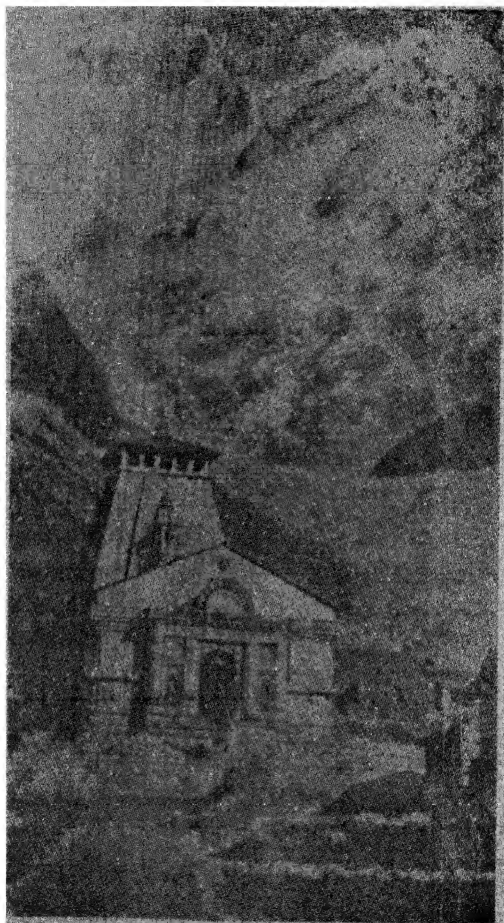
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## Kedarnath

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**K**EDARNATH AND BADRINATH are two important centres of pilgrimage on the Himalayas, which are reached with considerable difficulty by pilgrims unfamiliar with the ways of the mountain tracts. Four hundred miles to the north-east of Hardwar, Kādre lies among the snow-capped ranges of the Himalayas. Miles and miles of hill and dale have to be crossed before the pilgrim could set his foot on the sacred precincts of Kādre. Situated at a height of 11,753 feet above sea-level, there are few of the amenities of city life in this region. But more than half the distance is now covered by Himalayan Air Transport Co. Pilgrims of moderate or poor means, however, prefer the old, old way of trudging through the snow on foot or hire dandies or kandies or horses to carry them. Dandies are vehicles like chairs carried by four men while kandies are baskets in which one can sit folded





SRI KEDARNATHJI TEMPLE

and is carried by a man on his back. The train runs up to Rishikesh (about 14 miles from Hardwar) where the actual pilgrimage begins. Rishikesh is a temple of Bharatha, the only one of its kind in the country. There are also temples of Sri Rama and Sita. The road to Kedar starts from Lakshmana Jhula, a hilly station on the other side of the Ganges, which is crossed by a hanging bridge. There are temples and dharmasalas on the bank of the river where there are Lakshman Kunda, Sita Kunda, Rama Kunda, etc.

Kedar marks the spot where according to an authority "Sadasiva, a form of Siva, in his flight from the Pandavas, assumed the form of a buffalo and attempted to dive into the earth to escape his pursuers but left his hind quarters on the surface". A rock is still worshipped as part of the deity and the remaining portions of the body are revered elsewhere: at Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhyamaheshwar and Kalpeshwar. Four miles from the temple on the way to the Mahapanth peak is a precipice known as the Bhairab

Jhamp where devotees formerly performed *harikari* by flinging themselves from the summit. The practice has now been suppressed by the Government.

The chief priest of Kedarnath is always a Jangama from Mysore or some other part of South India, demonstrating again the fundamental unity of the Hindus of all India from the Cape to the Himalayas.

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## Badrinath

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**B**ADRINATH is situate in the Garhwal District in the United Provinces. It is part of the Central Himalayan axis and is 28,210 feet above sea-level. The sacred region comprises an open valley three miles long and one mile broad with two lofty mountains on the east and the west, known as Nara and Narayan Parvathi. The beautiful river of Alakananda and a number of its tributaries flow through this valley. This region is also known in sacred history as Uttara Khand. It is said to contain five Bhadris, *viz.*, Bhadri Narayan, Yoga Bhadri (Padukeswar), Bhaurshya Badri (near Tapovan), Bridha Badri (Abimath) and Dhyan Bhadri (near Setang). The whole Uttara Khand or Bhadrinath Valley is considered very sacred and is looked upon as the main gate to Kailas, the abode of Siva.

The most important temple—the one which is the object of so much arduous

and difficult pilgrimage to Hindus all over India—is the Vishnu temple on the right bank of the Alakananda river. The temple is built on one of the shoulders of the hill. The original temple is said to have been built by Shri Sankaracharya himself; but the several ancient buildings have been swept away by avalanches.

The present temple is a modern one. It is conical-shaped and carries a small cupola covered with plates of copper and crowned with a gilded ball and spire. There is a very sacred tank below this shrine, which is supplied with water from a hot spring through a spout in the shape of a dragon's head. Pilgrims bathe in this tank. The chief priest of this temple is known as the Raval and is always a Brahmin of the Nambudiri caste of Malabar, which goes a great way to prove the truth of Sankaracharya's visit to this place and the founding of the temple. The temple possesses a number of villages yielding a revenue of some Rs. 7,000 assigned to it. The temple is said to be annually closed in November for winter when the priests remove the treasure and

other things to Joshimahi, returning to Badrinath in May.

Badrinath is also the centre of one of the four Maths founded by Sri Sankaracharya. The place where the Math stands is known as Jotirmath. A lonely thatched hut near a mulberry tree marks the site of the original Math and temple. It is said that the tree was planted by Shri Sankaracharya, the Adiguru himself and that it stands there for last several hundreds of years. This spot is nowadays visited by but a few. The majority of pilgrims are content with visiting a place named Jotismath village near the site of the original Math.

Apart from its Shrines and Math, Badrinath is also famous as the sacred region known as Badarikashram in Epics and Hindu legend. It is related in the Mahabharatha that many yogis and poets and others went to this spot to practise meditation and win the favour of the Supreme Deity. Shri Krishna and Arjuna are said to have lived here for a long time. The celebrated Sanskrit grammarian, Vararuchi, is said to have visited the

sacred region of the Himalayas and to have obtained the materials for his work by propitiating Mahadeva. The legend of Vyasa and other Rishis visiting Parasara at Badarikashram to learn the great truths of Dharma is also well known. These associations have made the place one of immemorial sanctity and have invested it with importance for the entire pilgrim-minded India.

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## Ayodhya

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**A**YODHYA, six miles from Fyzabad station situate in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, is one of the most sacred places in Northern India and derives its sacredness from its association with the birth and life of Shri Rama, the great epic hero and Deity. Innumerable pilgrims visit the place every year from all over India. An authority on Indian literature writes: "Probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Ramayana—the nobility and magnanimity of Rama's character and the conjugal devotion and fidelity of his wife Sita, have, for a great many centuries, exercised a far-reaching moral effect as paragon for imitation among Indians." No wonder that Rama's birth-place should be looked upon with great reverence by the Hindus and that a visit to that place should be considered all important in any scheme of pilgrimage.



The town has had a varied history. Once it seems to have been a Buddhistic centre. Hieun Tsang who visited it, says that he saw no less than 20 Buddhistic monasteries there with a population of more than 3,000 monks. This is confirmed by recent discoveries disclosing Buddhistic remains. With the restoration of Brahmanism, it regained importance and became the seat of a long line of Hindu and Rajput dynasties. In the Middle Ages, the Mahomedans took possession of it and made it the chief city of the kingdom of Oudh. The city suffered considerably during Mahomedan rule; many temples were destroyed and mosques built out of their materials. When the Mahomedan capital was removed to Fyzabad, Ayodhya was able to rear its head again and attempts were made to restore its temples and its sacredness.

The central and most interesting spot in Ayodhya is Janam Asthan—the place where Sri Rama was born. There seems to have been originally a fine temple on this spot. When Babar visited the place in 1520 A.D., he had the temple destroyed

and a mosque built on the site which still exists and is known as Babar's mosque. This mosque has several columns of close-grained blackstone 7 or 8 feet high with square bases and capitals which probably belonged to the old Rama's temple. After this desecration and the erection of a mosque on the old site, the Hindus did not give it up but, curiously enough, worshipped at the mosque along with the Mahomedans. A most serious communal clash broke out in 1855. The Mahomedans took possession of the whole building driving out the Hindus and even attacked another holy temple near-by known as Hanuman Garh. The Hindus made a counter-attack in which 75 Mahomedans were killed. After this quarrel which lasted for some time, a railing was put up to divide the devotees of the two faiths. The Mahomedans continued their worship inside the mosque, while the Hindus made their offerings and performed their worship outside and were forbidden entrance into their enclosure. The Hindus have raised a masonry platform just outside the mosque on the left and this is

pointed to as the place where Sri Rama was born.

The Hanuman Garh, a massive structure containing a temple to Rama, is another important place of worship. It is also called Ramkot and dates from Aurangzib's time. The walls are very high and the temple curiously enough is largely infested by wild monkeys.

On the north-west of this there is another temple known as Kanak Bhavan (house of gold). It contains images of Rama and Sita with crowns of gold.

The Tret-ka-Thakur marks the place where Rama is said to have performed the great Horse-sacrifice and set up images of himself and of Sita. Those images are said to have been thrown into the river by Aurangzib. This temple is opened only at nights and that too on the 11th day (Ekadasi) of the dark and bright halves of the month and on Rama Navami days.

There is a place sacred to Buddhists also in Ayodhya, known as Mani Parbat. Here, it is said, Buddha preached the law when he was living in a village near-by.

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## Prayag (Allahabad)

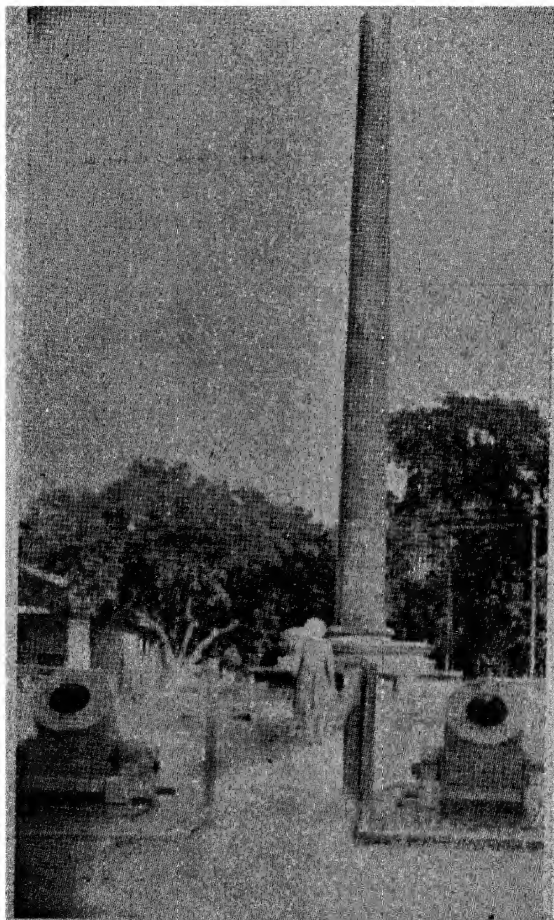
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PRAYAG or modern Allahabad derives its sanctity from the fact that it is the meeting place of the great rivers the Ganges and the Jumna. According to tradition, yet another river, Sarasvati, is believed to meet the Ganges at this point as a subterranean stream, hence the name *Tri-veni* or the Triple Braid. All the three rivers are sung of in the hymns of the Vedas and thus derive their sanctity from time immemorial. A small tract of land lying between Sarasvati and a tributary river became famous as a holy land in very early days. In a famous passage (ii, 7-24) Manu assigns the name of Brahmvarta to this place, describes it as having been fashioned by the gods and sets up the conduct and manners of its inhabitants as the norm of morality. The Brahmanas relate the stories of many sacrifices in Brahmvarta, especially on the banks of the Sarasvati, which has been identified with a river in the Punjab. And it is not without significance that

Triveni is more familiarly known as Prayag or the place of the great sacrifice. Tradition speaks of the god Brahma, the creator in the Hindu Triad, performing a great sacrifice in the hoary mists of antiquity. The three fires that were needed for this were kindled at Pratishtana the modern Jhansi, at Alarka south of the Jumna and at Prayag. It is possible that the meeting points of the rivers were considered specially propitious for the performance of sacrifices; for many other confluences are also designated by the suffix 'prayag'. Primarily, however, the sanctity of Prayag is due to the sanctity of the rivers meeting there. Sarasvati, which is lost in the desert sands of Rajputana, south-west of the Punjab and which is supposed to join the Ganges beneath the earth here, is described in the Rig Veda as the best of mothers, rivers and goddesses. The Ganges, though mentioned in the Vedas, acquired its position as the most sacred river in India only much later. Flowing at first in the abode of the gods, she was brought down to earth by the austerities of Bhagirata. The Jumna, *k* is

considered by later tradition to be the same as Yami, twin sister of Yama in the Vedic hymns; hence she is described as the daughter of the Sun.

According to the Puranas, the three gods of the Hindu Trinity: Brahma, Siva and Vishnu reside in a special sense at Prayag. Brahma is in the form of a Salmali tree at Pratishtana near-by, once, the capital of the lunar race of kings; Siva has assumed the form of the undying banyan at Prayag, and Vishnu is there as Madhava to whom a temple has been dedicated. The names of princes and sages, famous in history or legend, are closely connected with the holy city. Rama and Sita visited Prayag when they paid their respects to the sage Bharadvaja at his hermitage on their way to the Dandaka forest. The traditional Bharadvaja Ashram is shown near the politically famous Ananda Bhavan building. The Pandava princes are believed to have spent at least part of their exile near-by. The Buddha preached his ethics here. An Asokan pillar of the 3rd century B.C. has been found at Kausambi which is in the neighbourhood and was



ASOKA PILLAR AT ALLAHABAD

removed to the fort at Allahabad at the confluence. It also records the victories of the most celebrated of the Gupta Emperors, Samudragupta, in the fourth century A.D. Kausambi for a long time enjoyed the prestige of the capital city of India; both the Mauryas and the Guptas ruled their empires thence. Harshavardhana convened a notable religious conference at Prayag and performed one of his periodical sarvasva-danas. He gave up his all and begged his sister for a piece of cloth to tie round his waist. Here too Kumarila Bhatta, who founded the *purva-mimamsa* school of philosophy, successfully argued against Buddhism. Tradition relates that he committed suicide in the holy place to expiate for a great sin. Sankaracharya, in his triumphal march round India, did not forget the sacred confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna. Centuries later, Chaitanya of Bengal taught here his faith to his most famous disciple, Rup Goswami. Akbar the Great started his mission for his new religion, *Din-i-lahi* from Prayag which he rebuilt and renamed Ilaha-bad,



the City of God, probably a parallel to Ilavasa, another name of the city. There is an interesting Hindu story which says that a Brahmin boy of the place, by name Mukunda, was reborn as Akbar to revive the faded glories of the holy city and unite Islam and Hinduism in one faith. Jahangir recorded an inscription on the ancient stone-pillar of Asoka and built a beautiful garden, Kusru-bagh, to commemorate the memory of his rebellious son. He tried, but in vain, to root out the Akshaya Vata in the temple in the fort; and his failure has been regarded as a vindication of the eternal vitality of Hinduism which is symbolised by that tree. As often as he tried to cut it and pour molten lead into its roots, so often it again blossomed forth; and he exclaimed: Lo! the tree of Hinduism will not die! The graves of the Emperor's Rajput wife and her unfortunate son are there. Allahabad was one of the storm centres of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and it is of interest to note that Lord Canning read from the Fort on November 1, 1858, the Queen's famous proclamation, which announced Her Majesty's

assumption of the sovereignty of India and her promise to carry on the government with strict religious neutrality and without distinctions of race or creed.

The pilgrims who flock in endless numbers from all parts of India worship the rivers. At the *triveni-sangama*, flowers and fruits are offered to the Ganges, the Jumna and the Sarasvati; oblations given to dead ancestors and gifts presented away in charity. Some pilgrims get their heads tonsured. There are temples in honour of Somesvara—another name for Siva—Bharadvaja the sage, Madhava, and two serpent kings, Vasuki and Sesha. In the Fort, there is a famous underground temple, which contains the undying Banyan. Hieun Tsang records that the pious committed suicide by throwing themselves down from this tree. The custom appears to have continued for a long time afterwards, and Jehangir is said to have cut down the tree. But a stump can be seen even now and it is believed to put forth leaves once a year. Though the tree is honoured by the pilgrims, the suicide custom has, of course, disappeared. Once

a year when the sun enters the sign of Kumbha there is a big festival called *Mahamela* which attracts numerous worshippers. Every sixth year there is the *ardha-kumbha-mela* which is considered more important. Once in twelve years, there is the *Kumbhamela*, which draws to Prayag more than a million pilgrims from all over India.

Modern Allahabad is a great educational centre and is the headquarters of a university. In the city there are a number of educational institutions, of which the most notable are the Muir College, the Women's College and Kayastha Patasala University College.

Allahabad is 520 miles from Calcutta, 319 miles from Delhi, and 845 miles from Bombay. It is an important railway junction.

## Benares

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THE genesis of Benares or Baranussi is described as the place between the rivers Barana and Asi sprung from the right and left feet of Mahadev. It is the holiest city of India. Its deity, God Visvanatha, is famed throughout the length and breadth of India. Thousands of pilgrims daily wend their way to Benares to bathe in the sacred Ganges. Benares is also the supreme centre of Hindu religion and Sanskrit learning. The opinions of its Pundits carry decisive authority in all matters of religion. On account of its great importance, all the peoples and parts of India have tried to carve a place for themselves in the holy city and set up monuments and temples of their own therein. Benares is the silken thread which binds all Hindus together. It is Benares that exerted in the past to lay the foundation of national consciousness and 'Varanasi', as the late Malabari said, "is at least as old as the epics. Goutama Buddha began to preach

his new gospel there. No pundit of old was worthy of recognition until he vindicated his scholarship in Benares. Towards Benares did the pious Hindu, weary of the world, direct his steps in old age; he deemed himself blessed if he shuffled off his mortal coil on the banks of the Ganges. From Benares issued the *Sadhu* with his glad tidings to all corners of *Jambudwipa*. From Benares was carried the sacred water which ensured heaven to the dying soul. The metropolis of sacred learning, and the loadstar of Hindu faith, Varanasi has bound all Brahminised Hindus together into a national whole for centuries".

A short historical account of Benares will be useful to show how it came to occupy such a central place in Hindu religion and also its many-sided activity and importance.

At the beginning of the historical period about 600 B.C. Benares (Kasi) was the seat of a flourishing kingdom comprising, it is said, about half the extent of the present-day United Provinces. Its inhabitants were brave in war; industry and

the arts flourished; its goods were sought after by neighbouring peoples. Benares, however, was not destined to flourish long as an independent kingdom. It was an age of small states and internecine wars. Benares fell a prey to its aggressive neighbour Kosala, whose kings annexed the city to their dominions. Benares subsequently passed to the king of Magadha as dowry of the Kosalan princess married to the latter and became one of the many cities of the Magadhan Empire. Subsequently the city passed under the rule of the Sakas under Kanishka. Benares again leap into fame and glory when the great Bharasaivas drove out the Sakas, re-established the Hindu Empire and celebrated the event by performing the sacred horse-sacrifice (the Asvamedha) at Benares from which probably arose the Dasasvamedha Ghat as conjectured by Dr. Jayaswal. The city continued to flourish and grow in importance as the most sacred city of the Hindus throughout the Hindu period.

With the advent of the Moslems, Benares, being the chief religious city of the Hindus,

was subjected by them to fierce attacks and barbarous destruction. When the last Gahadwal king Jayachandra was defeated by Mahmud of Ghor, his General Kutubudin Aibak captured Benares in 1194, destroyed a thousand temples of the city, built mosques over their sites and carried away immense plunder. His example was followed by subsequent Sultans of Delhi. Alauddin Khilji had the temples of Benares destroyed. Again in the 15th century, the Sharquis of Jaunpur razed the temples to the ground and with their materials built Mosques at Jaunpur, whose inscriptions testify to the sacrilege to the Hindu fanes. With the advent of the tolerant Akbar, Benares enjoyed some peace and protection. Encouraged by his kindness, Raja Todarmal rebuilt the temple of the Lord Visvanatha, Raja Man Singh built the Manmandir. The famous Hindi poet Tulasi Das lived in it. With the accession of Aurangzib the policy was again changed and the darkest period of persecution overtook Benares. Under his orders all the temples of Benares were razed to the ground, and on the sites of two most sacred temples, those of

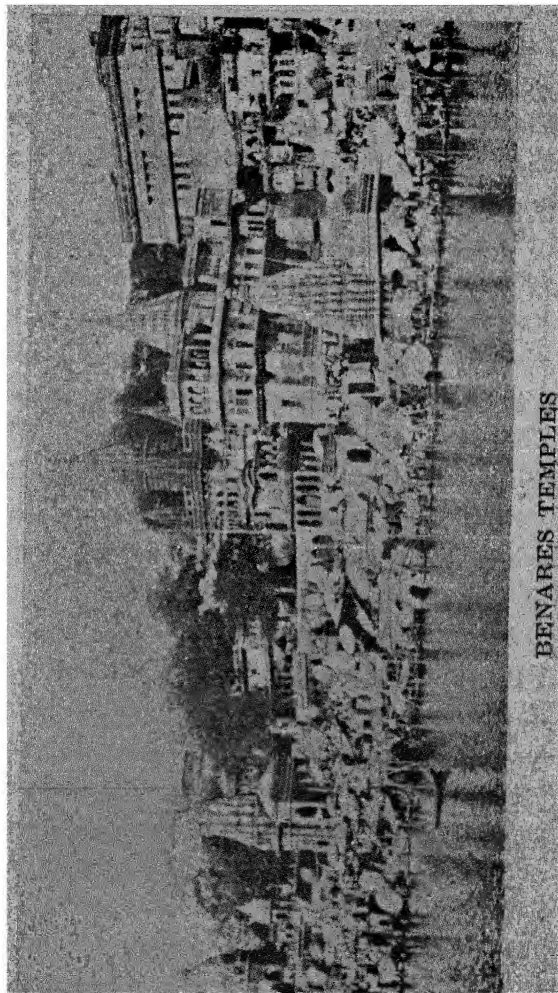
Visvanatha and Bindu Madhava, a mosque and two minarets respectively were erected. Aurangazib even renamed the city as Mahumudabad—a name which has not survived. With the fall of the Moghuls, the city passed into the hands of the Muslim Nabobs of Oudh. They entrusted the administration of the city to a Bhumihar Brahmin, Nanasaram, the founder of the present family of the Maharajas of Benares. Under the Brahmin administrator and his descendants and in the most favourable times brought about by Maratha predominance in Northern India, Benares again became peaceful and flourishing. Her temples and ghats were rebuilt or added to; far-famed scholars again came and made it their abode, and the stream of pious pilgrims from the distant parts of India began to flow uninterruptedly. English rule established about 1772 has led to the increased prosperity of the place.

The central temple of Benares, the most important one, is that of Lord Visvanatha. The present temple dates from the 18th century when it was



rebuilt during the Peishwaship of Baji Rao. In the following year, Maharaja Ranjit Singh covered the spire and dome of the temple with golden sheets. It is these golden sheets that make a dazzling glow in the brilliant sunshine that lights the holy city by day. The temple is open from 4 A.M. to 7 P.M. Elaborate ritualistic worship comprising Choti Arti, Bari Arti, etc. is performed by the priests every day and the offerings are freely distributed to the needy and the destitute.

To the east of the old Visvanath temple, there is a holy well known as Gyanavapi. The well lies in the centre of a colonnade adorned with beautifully ornamented pillars. In the court which leads to the colonnade, there is a colossal Nandi of bright red colour. The well is deemed very sacred. One is unable to see the opening of the well which is entirely hidden from sight by the masses of flowers which are perpetually thrown on it by pious pilgrims. At the narrow aperture of the well, there sits a Brahmin lading out the water in return for cash to a number of eager pilgrims each of whom receives a fixed quantity



BENARES TEMPLES

for sipping and ablution. It is believed that when the Mahomedans demolished the old Viswanath temple, the image was thrown into this well from which it was afterwards recovered.

The next important temple is the one dedicated to Annapurna. The present temple dates from the 18th century when it was rebuilt. According to legend, Siva deputed the Goddess to feed the world. The most popular festival of Benares is celebrated in this temple. During the Deepavali, a big Annakut is held and the golden image of the Goddess is taken out in procession.

An interesting temple is the one to Ganesa known as Sakshi Vinayak. Every pilgrim after visiting Visvanatha and Annapurna temple should visit the huge figure of Ganesh in this temple possessing silver hands and feet, and it is said that certificates are issued to pilgrims (hence the name Sakshi Vinayak) who have duly performed worship at the various temples of Benares.

Other temples worthy of note may be mentioned: Mahadeva temple in the

Dasasvamedha Road where free food is distributed to poor students, Kali temple on the same road worshipped by Bengalis Kēdareshwar temple and Kumaraswami Mutt which have been built by the Matadhipathis of Tanjore district, the Lakshminarayan temple, the Bhaskaranand temple which contains a fine image of the saint Bhaskarananda Saraswati in white marble, the Durgaji temple which is held in great veneration, Sankala Mochana temple dedicated to God Anjaneya; the Gauranja temple built by the followers of Shri Chaitanya of Bengal, where an annual Mela is held, the Visalakshi temple, a fine temple in Dravidian style built by the Nattukottai Chettis of South India, and Gopal Mandir built by the followers of Vallabbacharya. There are several temples dedicated to Vishnu also, the chief being the Balaji temple in the Scindia Ghat built by the Gwalior State, the Bindu Madhava temple near the Pandita Ghat and the Adi Keshava temple. The Ghats of Benares are as important as, if not more than, the temples. To die, to have the body cremated on the steps of

these holy ghats is considered the most worthy, the most pious end which a Hindu's life could have. Of the numerous Ghats, the most sacred and famous are the Asi Ghat said to be at the confluence of the Asi with the Ganges; the Dasaswamedha Ghat considered to possess very great sanctity and historically famous as the one founded by the great Bharasaivas, a powerful Hindu dynasty of the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D.; the Manikarnika, Panchaganga and Varuna Ujangan Ghats. It may be mentioned that the Manikarnika is considered the most sacred and may be called the central ghat of Benares. The ghat derives its name from a legend. There is a kund over the ghat near which Vishnu is believed to reside. Vishnu's shadow is stretched over the water of the kund. Mahadeva once visited Vishnu, was bewildered and his ear-ring dropped into the kund. Hence the name Manikarnika. These ghats, apart from their sacredness, add greatly to the beauty of the city and the river and form a wonderful setting for the ceaseless bath and prayer and worship.

carried on by unending stream of pilgrims every day.

This account of Benares and its sacredness may well be concluded with the description given by Sister Nivedita in her 'Foot-falls of Indian History'. Benares, she says, "is not only an Indian Canterbury, it is also an Oxford. Under the shadow of temples and monasteries cluster the schools and dwellings of the pundits or learned Sanskritists, and from all parts of India the poor students flock there to study the classics and ancient rituals of Hinduism. The fame of Nuddea is in her Sanskrit logic, but that of Benares in her philosophy and Brahmin lore. Thus she remains ever the central authority on questions of worship and of the faith, and her influence is carried to all ends of India by every wandering scholar returning to his own province . . .

"Here is love of learning with labour and poverty . . . . The spontaneous benefactions of rich nobles and merchants were doubtless enough in the Middle Ages . . . . to maintain the pundits in whose homes the students lived. But in

modern times the institution of the *chattras* has grown up and it is said that in the city there are three hundred and sixty-five of these . . . .

"Benares is more than the precincts of a group of temples. She is even more than a university and more than the historic industrial centre of three thousand years. The solemn Manikarnika stands rightly in the centre of her river front. For she is a great national *Smasan*, a vast burning ghat. 'He who dies in Benares attains *nirvana*' . . . . All India feels this. All India hears the call. And one by one, step by step, with bent head and bare feet for the most part come there, chiefly widows and Sadhus, whose lives are turned away from all desire save that of a holy death."

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## Sarnath

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THE environs of Benares are no less memorable in the religious history of India than Benares itself. Sarnath which is only three miles from Kashi is sacred to the Hindus from pre-Buddhist times. The name itself is derived from an ancient little shrine dedicated to Shiva and bearing the name of Saranganatha. But the glory of Sarnath is not confined to Hindu India. It is memorable as the place where 2500 years ago Buddha preached his first sermon after his enlightenment and the great king Asoka later erected a wonderful memorial pillar.

Sarnath was originally a deer park—Rishipatna—the abode of the Rishis where ascetics and sages discoursed on religion; and the way of salvation. Adjoining the sacred centre of culture, Kashi-Sarnath was chosen as the fit place to preach the new religion of the Buddha. Additional sanctity is also attributed to Sarnath on account of the wide-spread Buddhist belief that the Deer Park of

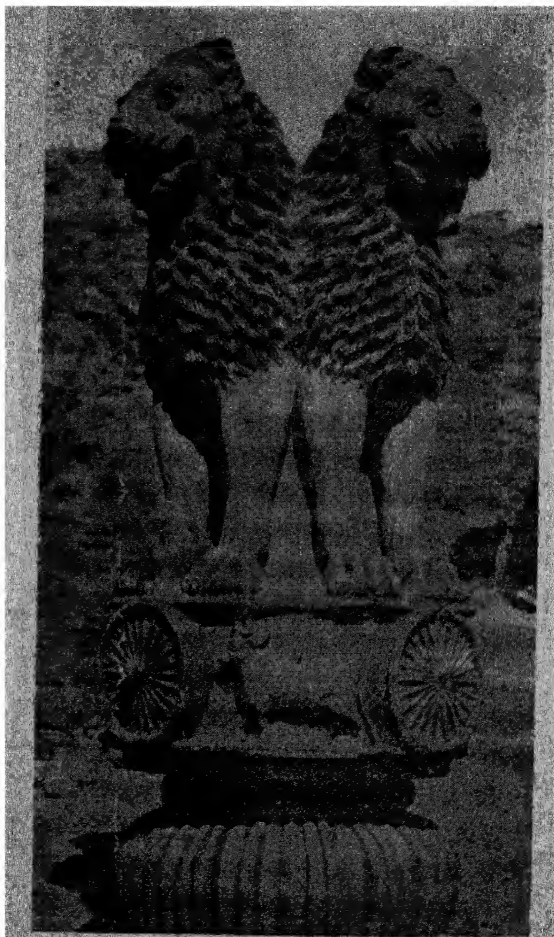


Sarnath was the scene of one of the Jatakas or previous-life stories of Buddha, who was then born a deer, the lord of a herd of 500." The Deer Park (Mrigdava) is the subject of a very picturesque and moving legend. There was a herd of deer in the forests of Sarnath. The king of Benares daily used to go into the forests, hunt and kill the deer. The leader of the herd approached the king and said that he would send one stag each day for the king's food and asked the latter to desist from the cruelty of hunting. The king agreed. Now one day, the turn came to a doe big with young. She remonstrated with the leader of her herd saying that though she was herself willing to die, it was unjust that her young one in the womb should also die. The leader of the herd (who was none other than the Bodhisatva in a previous incarnation) felt the injustice of her words and said: "I cannot break the promise I made to the king. I shall go in thy place." So saying he went and stood in the king's palace yard. The king was astonished to find the leader presenting himself thus

and on being appraised of the reason, was suddenly touched and ordered that henceforth there shall be no inhumanity. It was in such hallowed place that Buddha made his first disciples.

The story goes that Buddha, after his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Gaya, started all alone for Sarnath covering the distance of 288 miles in 60 days. Kaundanya and four other associates were there to receive the Buddha. And to them the Buddha preached his first sermon "exactly at sunset on the full moon day in the month of Aesala (June-July) 528 B.C".

When two centuries later the Mauryan Emperor Asoka became a convert to Buddhism, he visited Sarnath and erected "a huge pillar with a finely carved lion capital at the very spot where Buddha is believed to have sat and delivered his sermon". It is seven feet high and consists of a bell-shaped base surmounted by four lions standing back to back, the middle portion or abacus above the fluted bell being adorned with the figures of a lion, an elephant, a bull



THE FAMOUS LION CAPITAL OF SARNATH

and a horse with four wheels in between.

Sarnath fell into oblivion from time to time during centuries of Muslim domination. But recent excavations have laid bare a wealth of archæological discoveries that reveal the glory of the civilization that has lain buried during the ages. There is a beautiful shrine about 45 feet square, the nucleus round which had sprung up a multitude of temples and stupas. Hundreds of beautiful pieces of sculpture have also been unearthed and the "Sarnath finds in themselves are almost sufficient to illustrate the history of Indian sculpture". These can be seen by the visitors to the Museum situated amidst the picturesque ruins of the Buddhist city carefully revealed to us.

It is fitting that a site so ancient and so full of hallowed memories should be the site of a modern Buddhist temple completed by the Mahabodhi Society in 1981. This beautiful shrine is named the Mulagandhakuti Vihara or "The Principal of the Perfumed Chambers."

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## Bhitargaon

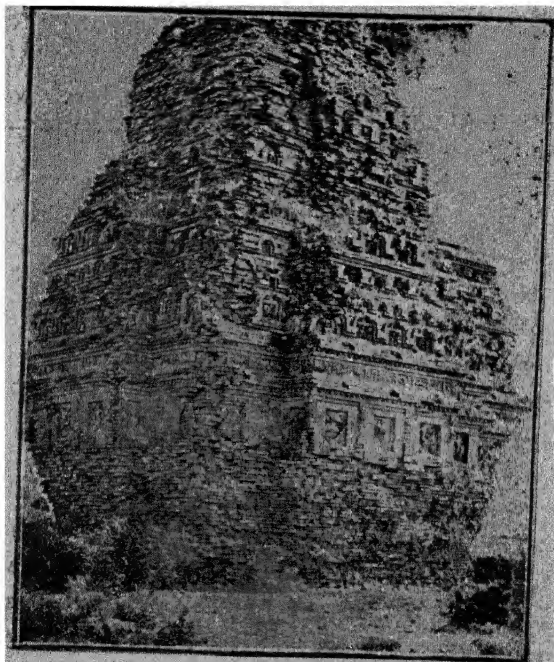
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ONE of the oldest of north Indian temples is the brick temple of Bhitargaon in the Cawnpore district. Judging from style, Cunningham assigned it to the 7th or 8th century, but later authorities assume that it is at least three centuries older than the date mentioned by Cunningham. In his report of the archaeological survey of India (1908-9), Mr. J. Ph. Vogel observes: "We do not know how long this peculiar style of carved brickwork remained in vogue, but we may safely assume that it flourished during the rule of the great Gupta Emperors, *i.e.*, the 4th and 5th centuries." If the latter point is conceded, says the author of "Temples, Churches and Mosques",\* the Bhitargaon temple marks a very early stage in the evolution and development of temple architecture in India.

The temple is built on a square plan with doubly recessed corners and contains

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\* G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.



TEMPLE AT BHITARGAON

a cella 15 ft. square, and a porch or ante-room nearly 7 ft. square which are connected by a passage. Above the sanctum there is an upper chamber of less than half its size. In the early fifties the spire was struck by lightning with the result that the top portion was thrown down and the upper room became exposed to the sky.

The outer ornamentation of terra-cotta sculpture is certainly the most striking feature of the Bhitargaon temple. The walls rise in bold mouldings, their upper portions being decorated with a row of rectangular panels alternating with ornamental pilasters.

It is, indeed, a good example of the characteristic style of the Ganges Valley in which the sikhara and cella together form a tower. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his "History of Indian and Indonesian art" points to the decoration of the walls with terra-cotta reliefs of Brahmanical subjects as the distinguishing feature of the Bhitargaon temple.

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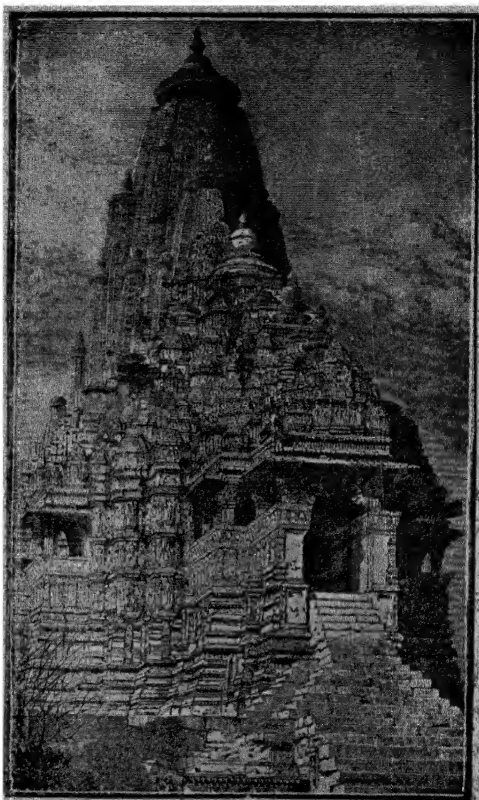
## Khajuraho

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**N**O up-country traveller can afford to miss the Khajuraho temples which are among the most beautiful sanctuaries in the Gangetic Valley. Khajuraho or Khajurapura was the famous capital of the Chandella dynasty, which flourished in the tenth century and is celebrated in the songs of the poet Chand. It is in the heart of Bundelkhand in the United Provinces, and a sixty mile road connects it with Harpalpur station on the G. I. P. Railway.

Nothing remains of the past magnificence of the place but the thirty odd cathedrals which bespeak the wealth and glory of its rulers in the past. They are treasures of architectural perfection exemplifying the breadth of vision and vastness of sympathy evinced in the construction of cathedrals dedicated to Saivite, Vaishnavite and Jain deities. The Mahadeo temple is a holy mountain of masonry. "Every inch of the Kandarya Mahadeo temple is covered with carving. Over-elaborate the Purist





TEMPLE AT KHAJURAHO

might style it, yet there is nothing haphazard or superfluous about it; for each scrap of sculpture serves an appointed purpose, contributes its quota towards the majesty of the edifice as a whole. The Indian builder was a preacher as well as a creator. With the material at his disposal, he accomplished a twofold task; for not only did he raise a building consecrated to his religion, but by the manner in which he laid one stone upon another, he exemplified the tenets of that religion. Mahadeo or Siva is the god of fertility, and the external carving illustrates the primitive notions associated with the philosophic concept." This sanctuary is reminiscent of the sculpture galleries on the roof of Milan Cathedral as General Cunningham is reported to have counted no less than eight hundred and seventy-two statues in the temple, ranging from two and a half to three feet in height.

As the Kandarya Mahadeva temple is the bright particular star amongst the Saivite sanctuaries, so the Ramachandra temple heads the list of Vaishnavite places of worship. In plan, it is not unlike its

Saivite prototype and bears an inscription dating from 954 A.D. Khajuraho affords golden opportunities for studying Vaishnavite shrines and it is a fascinating occupation to try and pick out their distinguishing characteristics. Vertical lines on the foreheads of his followers are emblematic of Vishnu and, in consequence, the *sikharas* or spires of his temples, symbols of Mount Meru, the mountain of plenty, of joyous life and generous nature follow these same vertical lines.

Among other attractions are the great halls or the mandapas forming the approach to the shrines, which lends a human touch to the archæology of Khajuraho; for in these vestibules, we are told, theatrical and musical performances, *nautch* (dancing) and public meetings took place.

We have spoken of Saivite and Vaishnavite temples but Khajuraho still retains memorials of the Jain faith in abundance. The Jinanatha, the *piece de resistance* of the Jain temples, is the last of the "Big Three" monuments at Khajuraho. With its graceful pillars and profusion of sculpture,

this Jain cathedral is one of the most illuminating architectural documents to be found throughout the length and breadth of India. According to a Chandella inscription, dating from 954 A.D., this building was one of the contemporaries of the Ramachandra temple.

Only one great relic of Buddhist days is now extant at Khajuraho, but that one great relic is amazing in its eloquence; for it consists of a colossal Buddha, dating from the seventh or eighth century A.D.; erected in India at a period when Buddhism was on the wane and Brahmanism was in the ascendant, this statue acted as a signpost at the cross-roads of religion.

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# GWALIOR

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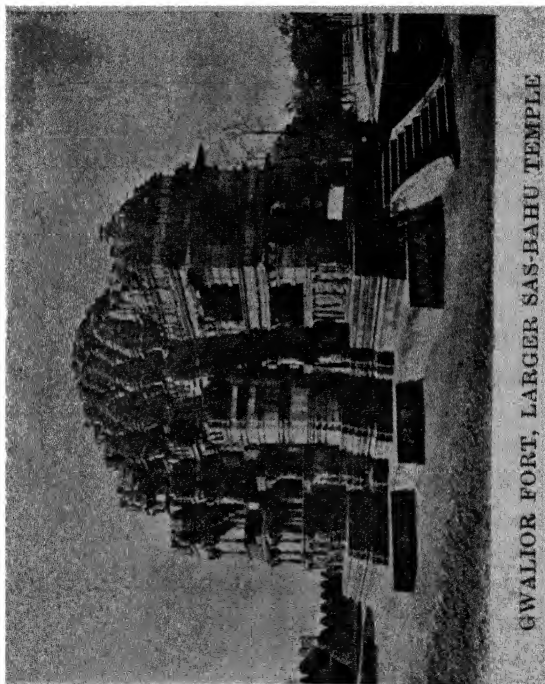
MORE than any other State in India, Gwalior is rich in the relics of historic pageantry and still vivid with the memorials of medieval chivalry. The present capital of the State is Lashkar, but the medieval fort of Gwalior retains all the glamour and glory of its unforgettable past. Gwalior Station is on the G. I. P. main line from Bombay to Delhi. The great Fort of Gwalior is a standing monument of its heroic history and a landmark for miles around. The sight of this majestic stronghold is full of thrilling interest to the traveller as he first beholds the gigantic walls rising tire upon tire upon the impregnable rocks.

Round the base of Gwalior Fort are several enormous figures of Jain *tirthankaras* or pontiffs, "which vie in dignity with the colossal effigies of Ramses II, who plastered Egypt with records of himself and his achievements. These

Jain statues were excavated from 1440-1473, and General Cunningham described them as unique in Northern India as well for their number as for their gigantic size. Babar, the first Mughal Emperor, was vandalistic enough to cause these stupendous figures to be mutilated; this was some sixty years after their completion. Fortunately, the entire statues were not destroyed and some of the faces have been restored, although the plaster heads are ill-suited to the majestic rock hewn bodies".

Further specimens of fine Jain figures are to be found in the Archæological Museum, situated in the Gujar Mahal, which was built in the fifteenth century by Raja Man Singh for his favourite queen Mriganayana.

Gwalior has many memorials of Mughal greatness in the form of mausoleums, but what is popularly known as "the thousand-armed temples" are two astounding examples of medieval Hindu sculpture: the *Sas-bahu* or *Sahasra-bahu* temples. They are remarkable for the profusion of sculptured columns and labyrinths of



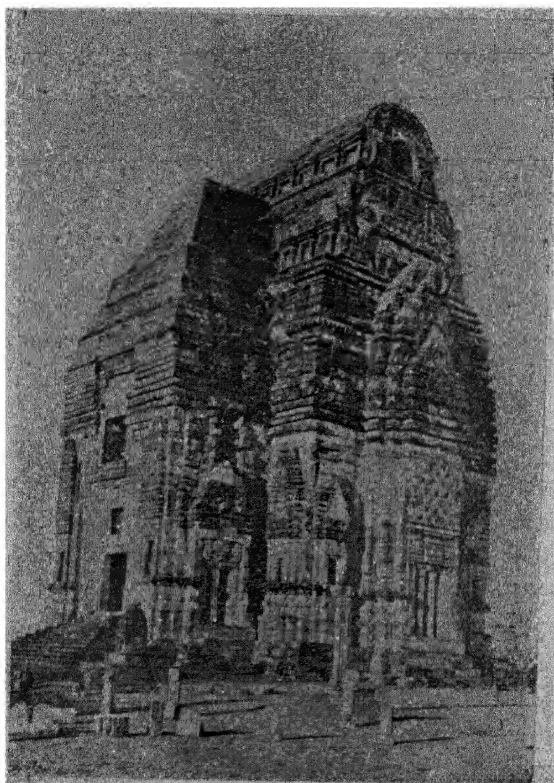
GWALIOR FORT, LARGER SAS-BAHU TEMPLE

pilasters which decorate the larger of the sister structures. Both edifices are dedicated to Vishnu and situated within the Fort area. The larger *Sas-bahu* temple bears a long Sanskrit inscription, stating that it was completed by a Rajput prince of Gwalior in 1098 A.D. The interior is remarkably well-lighted for a Hindu sanctuary and it is possible to obtain a good view of the gorgeous ceiling and its intricate carving without having recourse to artificial illumination.

Half way up the eastern road to the Fort is the Chaturbuja temple hewn out of living rock. It bears two contemporary Sanskrit inscriptions, from which we learn that it was excavated during the reign of king Rama Deva of Kanouj in the year 875 A.C. Further up, there are several rock-cut niches sheltering Hindu and Jaina images.

Another old temple known as Teli-ka-Mandir is the loftiest of all the existing buildings in the Fort, being over 100 feet in height. Mr. M. B. Garde records in his book "Archæology in Gwalior" that it is a 9th century Vishnu temple





TELI-KA-MANDIR, GWALIOR FORT,  
9TH CENTURY A.D.

peculiar in plan and design. The form of the Sikhara or spire, he goes on to say, "is Dravidian, common in Southern India, while all the decorative details are Indo-Aryan characteristic of Northern India. It is thus an interesting example of temple architecture in which both the northern and southern styles are blended". The temple possesses some bold and vigorous arabesque work in the horizontal band of decoration on its basement.

It would be out of place to record here the vicissitudes of Gwalior through the ages. The city is studded with fortresses and palaces that have defied the ravages of time and still stand out in all the strength and beauty of natural defences. The Mughal palaces of Jehangir and Shah Jahan are used now-a-days as magazines for military stores, but the practical atmosphere of utility which pervades them is counterbalanced by the halo of romance surrounding the neighbouring *Johar Tank*. It was here that the noble Rajput ladies of the *Zenana* committed suicide to avoid falling into the hands of Altamsh, the third and

greatest Sultan of the Slave Kings, who captured Gwalior in 1232 A.D. This episode of the self-immolation of the Rajput queens has proved a fruitful source of inspiration to many a bard. One of the buildings of interest at Gwalior is the tomb of Miyan Tansen, the great musician and composer of Akbar's reign. Of him, Abul Fazl wrote: Hindustan has not seen and will not see the like of him for a thousand years.

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## NEPAL

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**N**EPAL, the land of the Gurkhas, is an independent kingdom, extending along the southern slopes of the Himalayas for a length of about 500 miles. Contiguous on three sides to British territory, Nepal adjoins Tibet on the north and has through the centuries been in cultural contact with both China and India. The early history of Nepal is as usual legendary, but the chronicles record the doings of kings from Bengal and Kanchi (Conjeevaram) and a dynasty from Gujarat. Nepal's connection with Hindustan can be traced to the days of the Mahabharata War. By 100 B.C. we find the State under the domination of a Kshatriya king, who held sway over the whole of the then known country. The chronicles declare that Sankaracharya visited Nepal and reformed Hinduism. Inaccessible to Mahomedan invaders, Nepal has kept up its Hindu traditions in a way impossible for the rest of the country.

Nepal is also of historical interest as the birth-place of the Buddha, the son of a noble of Kapilavastu. There is a tradition that Buddha died at Kusingara also in Nepalese territory. No wonder that Nepal is beloved of Buddhists also, as the country is studded with Buddhist shrines and monuments of great interest.

Thus both the religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, have flourished together in Nepal, which has enjoyed complete religious liberty through the ages. We find tokens of it, not only in the art and architecture of Nepal, but in the lives of the people. In fact, Hindus and Buddhists may often be seen worshipping together at the same shrine. The shrines of Nepal are estimated at over 2,700 and the festivals are numerous. It is a pleasing feature of Nepalese life that though there are primarily Hindu festivals, the Buddhist population participate in them freely.

In the second century A.D., says Dr. Ananda Comaraswamy, the Indian Licchavis founded a dynasty in Nepal taking with them from Vaisali all

the elements of Indian civilization. "Mahadeva in the sixth century erected a Garuda-crowned *dhvajastamba* in the Vaishnava temple of Changu Narayan. A sculpture of the same reign is a bas-relief representing Vishnu as Trivikrama dedicated to the queen-mother Rajyavati. This work, which has been lost, is described by Levi as "one of the oldest pieces of Indian sculpture, properly Indian; it brings us into the presence of a definitely formed art, master of its means of free and sure inspiration; the sculptor utilizes the traditional methods of Indian art by grouping in one frame the stages of the story. It is a great work, almost a master-piece." An Uma Mahesvara group, dated in the reign of Guna Kamadeva, the founder of Katmandu (the present capital) in the tenth century; an image of Surya of the eleventh century; images of Surya and Chandra, dated in the thirteenth century, are still extant.

By far the most characteristic and beautiful temples of the Nepalese, writes Fergusson in his "History of Indian



DEVI BHAWANI TEMPLE—NEPAL

"Architecture" are those possessing many storeys divided with sloping roofs. One such temple is at Bhatgaon.

Great antiquity is also ascribed to Nepalese *stupas* four at Patan having been founded, according to tradition, by Asoka. Those four are still intact, says Dr. Coomaraswami in his "History of Indian and Indonesian Art", and in any case are of the old Indian hemispherical type. The chief characteristics of the later types is the exaggeration of the *chatravali* or range of umbrellas; the same feature is characteristic of the modern Tibetan form; and this development certainly had a share in that of the Far Eastern pagoda. The Nepalese temple is typically provided with a succession of sloping roofs. One of the most elegant is that of Bhavani at Bhatgaon, built in 1708; it stands on a pyramidal basement of five stages, recalling the basements of Burmese *stupas* and Cambodian temples. The most venerated Saiva shrine in Nepal is that of Pasupatinatha, near Katmandu (Kashta Mantapa).

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ONE OF THE STUPAS AT PATAN BUILT TO COMMEMORATE BUDDHA'S DEATH

## GAYA

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**G**AYA, one of the most sacred cities of India, is situate on the direct route of the Indian State Railways between Calcutta and Bombay, 292 miles to the west of the former. The town, consisting of old Gaya and the new Sahibganj, the administrative headquarters, is situate on the left bank of the Phalgun River which is also deemed sacred. The old Gaya, or Gaya proper, is built round the Vishnu Pada temple, which is the chief centre and object of pilgrimage and which is the largest and most important temple in Gaya.

The Vishnu Pada Temple is built over the footprint of Vishnu on a solid boulder which rises on the west bank of the Phalgun River. The temple faces east and its facade is very striking and beautiful. The temple itself was renovated by Maharani Ahalya Bai of Indore and is an octagonal building about 100 feet high.

The threshold is guarded by high folding doors plated with silver. In the centre of the temple is an octagonal basin plated with silver, surrounding the impress on the rock of Vishnu's foot about 16 inches in length, in which the famed offerings are made. Pilgrims stand round the basin and throw in their offerings of rice and water. To the south of the temple there is a handsome pillared hall or porch where the bare rock shows itself. The pilgrimage to this place is made by thousands of Hindus from every part of India, the number averaging from 100,000 to 200,000 per year.

The legend associated with Gaya and the importance of performing *shraddhas* therein is contained in the Vayu Purana and runs as follows:—There was once an Asura, by name Gaya, a demon of giant size who, by dint of long and austere penance, pleased the gods and obtained from them the boon that whoever saw or touched him was immediately admitted to Heaven. Numerous people touched his body and reached Heaven. Yama, the

lord of Hell, found his kingdom soon emptied and was alarmed that his own office may come to an end. The gods then assembled in council and devised a plan to overpower Gayasur. They approached him and asked him to lend his pure and holy body as a place of sacrifice. To this Gayasur consented and lay down with his head resting on the site where the old city of Gaya is situate. When the sacrifice was performed and the giant made an effort to rise, Yama placed a sacred rock on his head, and all the gods sat on him and began to crush him. This did not suffice to quieten the giant. He said: "O Gods, if you will not leave your perch, I will not make any more effort to rise. Only be pleased to grant me this boon that this spot shall be named after me and celebrated as holy Gaya, the holiest of holies, and that whosoever offers pindas here shall go to Heaven with his ancestors and progeny." Vishnu consented and placed his feet on a pedestal that rested on the body of the giant. This is the origin of the Vishnupada temple, where upon the

silver-encrusted pedestal marked with the footprints of Vishnu, pindas are offered. The importance of performing Shraddha in Gaya is mentioned in almost all the Puranas. Thus the Markandeya Purana says: "Flesh of the rhinoceros, turmeric, and soma juice and a Shraddha performed at Gaya, without doubt, yield the pitras' (ancestors) endless satisfaction."

There are said to be some 45 places or centres in and around Gaya, comprising an area 5 miles north-west and to 7 miles south, wherein the highly religious people should offer pindas. First, there is the Phalgun or Nairanjana River, which, even when silted up, is believed to be fed by a perennial spring underneath, the Vaitarani of Hindu mythology, on whose banks it is obligatory to perform the sacred rites. Then there are the spots marked by the Akshaya Bat or the Imperishable Banyan; the Pret Sila where men, whose relatives have died by poison or violence and have, therefore, gone to the realm of the unholy spirits, must offer pindas; the Brahma Yoni, the sacred spot out of which issued Brahma the Self-Begotten;

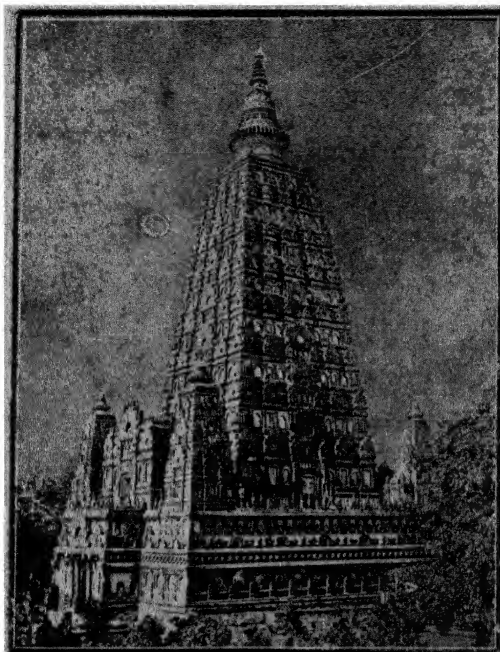
the Ram Sila where Rama performed the obsequies of his ancestors. The shrines of Brahma Yoni and Ram Sila are perched picturesquely on the tops of two hills that rise on either side of the city of Gaya and dominate the country around. These are the more important of the 45 places (excluding Vishnupada temple) where the devout offer pindas.

The most sacred, the most important place where the devout Hindu should offer the pindas to his ancestors is the Vishnu Pada temple. It is by performing the shraddhas here on Vishnu's footprint that the devout pilgrim gets the great and maximum merit that the place is capable of giving. Though most startling stories are told of the Gayawalis (priests) and their avarice and merciless methods for obtaining money, the pilgrimage and the finale constitute one of the most solemn spectacles known anywhere. Surrounded by Gayawalis, the devout pilgrim, with trembling hands tied round with a garland of flowers, offers the pindas one by one accompanied by the recitation of mantras to his ancestors.

The combined filial devotion and religious awe and hope make it one of the most solemn and inspiring rites known to any mundane religion; and according to faith, it bestows on the performer "long life, wisdom, wealth, knowledge, and final emancipation".

*Budh-gaya.*—Budh-gaya, which is at a distance of 7 miles from Gaya and which can be reached by a metalled road, is another sacred place and of great importance to the Buddhists. It is the seat of the "Enlightenment" of Lord Buddha, and it marks the site of the long penance by Buddha and His final victory over worldly desires.

The Buddhistic temple at Budh-gaya has a lofty pyramidal tower, massive and straight-lined, reaching to a height of 160 feet. It was at one time considerably higher but the crowning *kalasa* has been worn away by time and the elements. Even in its present form it is grand and unique among Indian temples. The temple seems to have been built in the 6th century A.D. by a Brahmin monarch who himself had rebuilt an ancient vihara



TEMPLE AT BUDH-GAYA



of Asoka. Entering the temple, one finds in the principal chamber a great gilded figure of Buddha sitting enthroned in the attitude known as "calling the world to witness". He is adorned with robe of state; there are various offerings around him and over his head is suspended a votive umbrella. Along the temple's northern side there runs a narrow platform of masonry raised to a height of 4 feet above the ground. It is known as Buddha's Promenade. It is 50 feet long. It was here that "the Blessed One", the "Storehouse of virtue", after having obtained enlightenment and realised the Bliss of "Nirvana" spent 7 days in meditation, walking up and down; and it is said that at the point where he set His feet, sprang up miraculous blossoms which are now commemorated by sculptured ornaments of stone. The shrine is now the object of pilgrimage for devout pilgrims from all Buddhist countries. A ruler of Ceylon of the 4th century A.D. built a *vihara* for the accommodation of Ceylonese pilgrims at this place. On the north side of the temple is the spot of the

“Enlightenment” itself the place where “the temple of sin” was thrown down, overshadowed by the “venerated Tree of Wisdom”, now represented by a descendant of the old *Ficus Religiosa* tree.

Budh-Gaya temple stands alone in its style and forms a unique and beautiful piece of architecture—“anomalous and unlike anything else we find in India, either before or afterwards”, but as Fergusson shrewdly points out “probably the parent of many nine-storeyed towers found beyond the Himalayas, both in China and elsewhere”.

Of the several legends connected with Budh-gaya and its monument, the most historic and world-famous story of Buddha's “Enlightenment” may be referred to. The Buddhist scriptures relate that, here at Budh-gaya, Gautama sat down in a cross-legged position, firm and immovable as if welded with a hundred thunderbolts; that then the Evil Mara came against him mounted on his elephant 250 leagues in height and hurled at him great mountains; that the mountains as they reached him turned into bouquets of

heavenly flowers, and the mighty elephant itself fell down on its knees in worship; and that the "Great Being" finally obtained "Enlightenment" at which lotus wreaths hung from the sky and "the great ocean itself became sweet down to its profoundest depths and the rivers were stayed in their course".

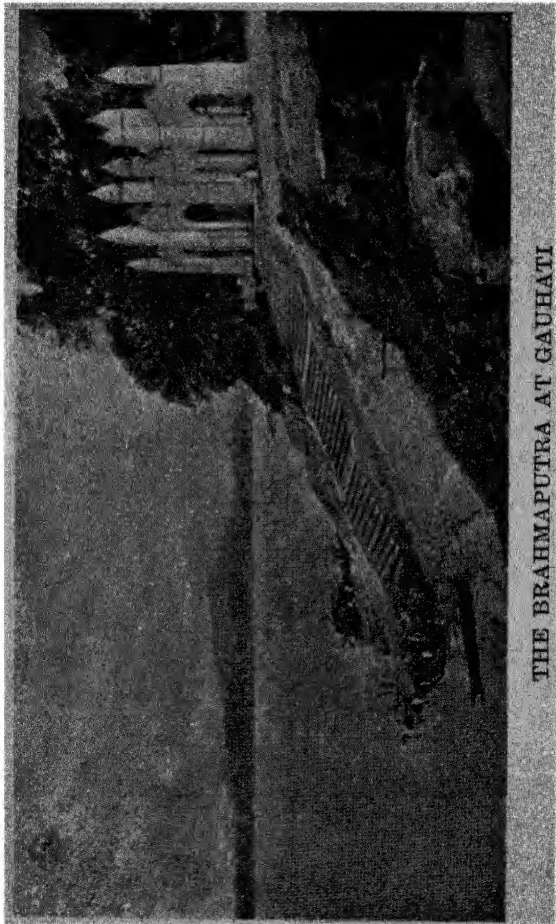
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# GAUHATI

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**G**AUHATI is the headquarters of the Kamrup District in East Bengal and Assam. It is the terminus station of the Assam-Bengal Railway. The town lies on both sides of the Brahmaputra river. Gauhati is set in the midst of most wonderful natural scenery and beauty. The town is surrounded on the south by a semi-circle of wooded hills, while in its front rolls the mighty Brahmaputra, which during the floods is nearly a mile wide. There is a rocky island in the centre of the river and the farther northern bank is fringed with graceful palms and farther north rises a beautiful range of low hills. It is in such attractive surroundings of rock and river and wooded glen that Kamakhya and other noted temples of Gauhati lie.

The oldest and by far the most important temple—the one that makes Gauhati one of the chief sacred places of India—is the Kamakhya temple situate on



THE BRAHMAPUTRA AT GAUHATI

the sacred hill of Nilachala three miles west of the town. Hindus from all over India visit and offer worship at this shrine. It is sacred to the Divine Consort of Siva. The origin of the Deity and the temple form part of a well-known legend, which has conferred sacredness on many another sacred city of India—Benares, Conjeevaram, etc. When Sati died, Siva, her husband, was overwhelmed with grief; and utterly disconsolate he carried her dead body and wandered from place to place. His wanderings took him to fifty-one places where, at each one of the places, it is said, a portion of Sati's dismembered body fell. All these places have ever since been sacred to her memory. Kamakhya is the place where one of these holy relics fell and hence is considered very sacred. The first temple to Kamakhya is said to have been built in the heroic age of the Epics by Narakasura, whose son, Bhagadatta, appears in the story of the Mahabharata. Narakasura was a proud and obdurate prince and the story says that he asked the Goddess to marry him. The Goddess consented on the

undertaking that he should construct for her a temple, a road and a tank, all in the course of a single night. He was on the point of completing this task when Kamakhya, in order to frustrate his unholy intention, made a cock crow before the usual hour. Narakasura was foiled and in his rage he killed the cock. A place eight miles from Gauhati where Narakasura is said to have killed the harbinger of dawn is still known as Kukurakota.

The temple built by Narakasura disappeared in the course of ages. The spot was discovered and its holiness revived by Biswasingha, the founder of the Koch kingdom of Kamarup. He built a temple on the ruins of the old one and at considerable cost and labour; had, it is stated, a gold coin placed between each brick of the building and had the temple consecrated with the help of high caste and learned Brahmins from Kanauj and other cities, who were specially brought down to perform the sacred rites.

The subsequent history of this temple, built at such cost and labour by a pious

king, is one which illustrates the fate which befell almost all the temples and holy cities of Northern India in the medieval period. The Mahomedan invader, the traditional Kalapahar—the same who desecrated or pulled down the great temples of Orissa—invaded Assam and pulled down the Kamakhya temple in 1558 A.D. Twelve years later, Biswasingha's son, Nara Narayan, rebuilt the temple and had it consecrated, it is said, with human sacrifices.

The basement of the existing temple, made of hewn stone, we are told, dates back to the time of Nara Narayan; but the superstructure is of more recent date. The present temple has an egg-shaped dome with little turrets. There are curious bas-reliefs and statues of considerable size round the shrine. Apart from its holiness, Kamakhya temple is set in such wonderful natural surroundings that it is well worth visiting for pleasures of scenery and sight-seeing, says the English writer of the Kamrup District *Gazetter*. "From the summits of the hill, there is a magnificent view over the surrounding



country. Its feet are washed by the Brahmaputra. . . . To the south there are the tumbled masses of the Khasi hill, rising out of the alluvium as cliffs rise out of the sea. . . . On the north are fields of golden rice and yellow mustard, groves of palms and feathery bamboos, surrounded and enclosed by rocky hills, while far away in the distance are the blue ranges of the Bhutan and the snowy peaks beyond."

Gauhati has a number of other temples and shrines in and around it, which have given it the name of the Temple-City of Assam. The first of these shrines is the temple to Siva in the Peacock Island of Woomananda which lies in the midst of the Brahmaputra. The Maha Sivaratri festival is celebrated with very great eclat here and attracts innumerable pilgrims.

The temple of Aswakranta stands on a rocky prominence on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river and is approached by a long flight of steps. Sri Krishna is said to have visited this spot with his consort Rukmini, and certain holes in the rock are pointed out as those made by

the hoofs of Krishna's horses. Another temple on the island near-by is said to have been erected by Sri Krishna himself to screen Rukmini, when staying here with him, from the eyes of curious people on the other bank.

There is an interesting temple to the Nine Planets (Navagraha) near Gauhati. It stands on the summit of a low hill to the east of the town. The roof of its dome has disappeared; but one can look down from above and see the altars of the Sun and the Moon and the seven Planets.

There is a sacred spot known as Vasishtasram, nine miles from Gauhati. The sage Vasishta of Ramayana fame is said to have performed penance here and realised the Supreme. The place is a very pleasant one and has all the features of an ancient asram. A temple has been erected on the spot in modern times. The great charm of Vasishtasram consists in a mountain stream which comes roaring down over large rocks and boulders.

A temple at Hajo, 15 miles from Gauhati, situate on the top of a hill, like

all the other temples of Gauhati, is greatly venerated. It is said to contain an image of Vishnu in his Man-Lion (Narasimha) avatara. The temple owns large rent-free lands and has a large staff of dancing girls, unknown, it is said, to other temples of Assam.

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# CALCUTTA

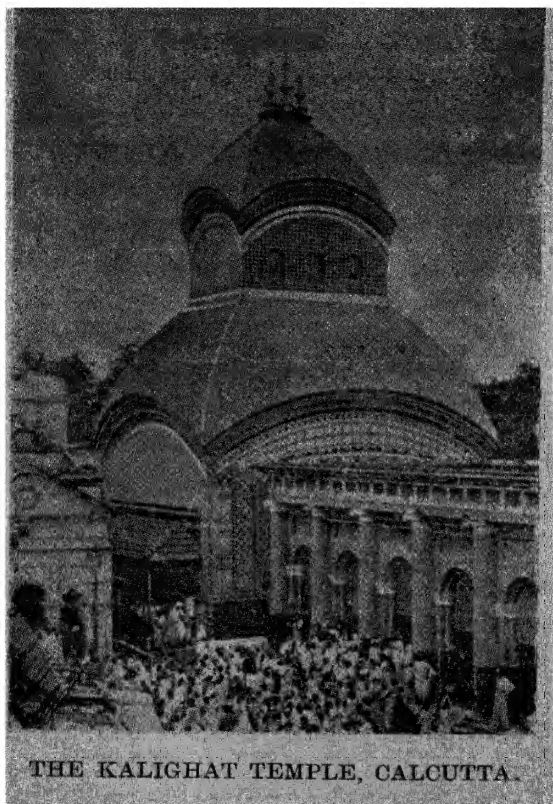
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CALCUTTA'S fame and importance as the leading city of India have rested chiefly on its having been the capital of the British Empire in India for a long time and on its being the capital of the province of Bengal. The town is, however, historically much older and seems to have possessed great religious importance from very ancient times as being situate at the junction of the Ganges and the Sea. Like Hardwar and Allahabad and Benares, which represent the source and other sacred points in the river course, Calcutta or Howrah represents the final confluence of India's holiest river with the Sea, and a bath herein in the Ganges is meritorious and enjoined on all pilgrims to Northern India.

One has to get down at Howrah Station to reach the bathing ghats on the Hughli. They have been constructed so as to lead to a sufficient depth of water and the bathers are protected from danger of an

expected rush of waters by iron railings fixed to the ghats. Brahman priests are constantly in attendance at the ghats and help the pilgrim to perform his ablutions and to offer puja to the River Goddess and to perform shraddha to ancestors which is also considered a meritorious performance even as at Gaya and Benares.

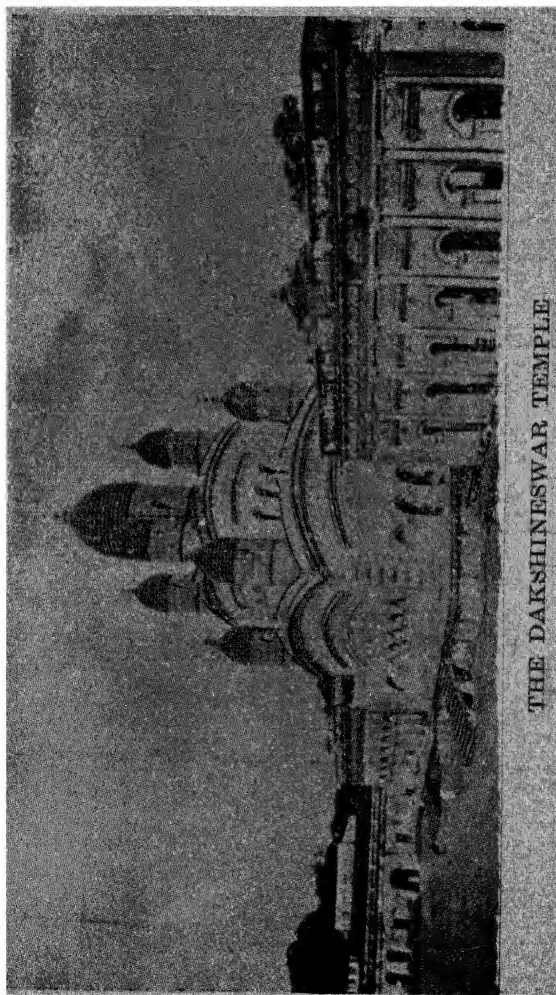
Three miles from Howrah lies Kalighat with its famous temple of Kali known all over India. The name Calcutta is a corruption of the old name of this place 'Kalighatta'. Kalighat, in spite of its big crowds and choultries and buildings, has the appearance of an ancient village. Its present temple is probably 300 years old. The image of Kali in the temple is of black stone measuring 3 or 4 feet in height. It has a red protruding tongue and a terrifying aspect and holds in its arms various weapons and skulls. Along with gentle and pious rites such as the offering of flowers and the performance of homas with fried grains in honour of the deity, animal sacrifices too of goats etc. obtain. The temple and the



THE KALIGHAT TEMPLE, CALCUTTA.

Deity possess very great sacredness and importance to the Bengalis, who see in her the universal mother and protector of the world and the Dread Avenger of Evil. Many are the festivals that are celebrated in her honour throughout Bengal, and it is to her that in times of distress, all hearts of Bengal are turned in adoration and prayer.

At Dakshineswar on the eastern bank of the Ganges, some four miles from Calcutta, there is a temple to Goddess Kali. It was founded by a rich Bengali lady named Rani Rasmani in the last century. The place and temple are famous as the one where Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the great sage of modern India, first began his life as a temple priest and grew into a great and renowned mystic and God-seer. The temple is a vast building with fine domes crowned with spires. It is reached by an open terrace above the Ganges between a double row of 12 small domed temples to Siva. On the other side of a great rectangular paned court, there is another big temple to Radha and Krishna.



THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE



The Kali temple, having been built by a woman of inferior caste, could not at first secure the services of a Brahmin priest. Ramakrishna Paramahansa's brother Ramkumar daringly accepted the work of the priest and on his death his brother, the celebrated Ramakrishna Paramahansa, took his place. The temple, though a modern one, has had the unique distinction of having awakened the spiritual genius of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa and of having imparted spiritual sight through him to a number of gifted souls in India and elsewhere.

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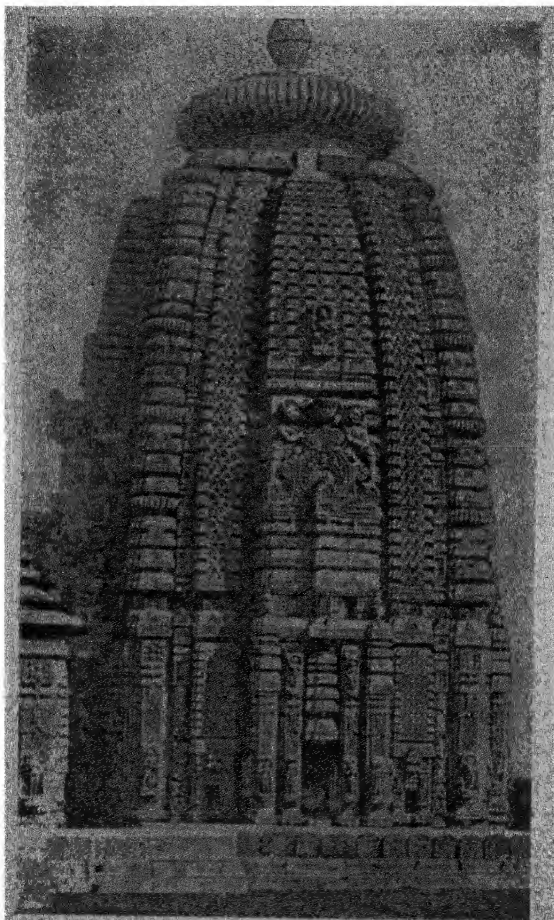
# ORISSA

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## Bhuvaneshvar

**B**HUVANESHVAR, a Railway Station on the main line between Calcutta and Madras, is the most noted temple city of Orissa. It was the capital of the famous Kesari kings of Orissa. They were great protagonists of Hinduism from the sixth to the ninth centuries A.D. when it was emerging triumphant on the ruin of the cults of Buddhism and Jainism. They filled their capital city with magnificent temples to Siva and other deities, made it a regular "forest of temples" at once to glorify their own conquests and to testify to their devotion to the great gods of Hinduism.

The chief temple is the one known as Lingaraja temple, dedicated to Bhuvaneshvar or Tribhuvaneshvar, the Lord of the Three Worlds. The main deity of the temple is represented by a sculpture about 8 feet thick and 9 feet high,



THE GREAT TEMPLE AT BHUVANESHVAR

representing Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Siva the Destroyer. The main temple, as is the case with all Orissan temples, consists of the four divisions: the tower, the porch, the Dancing Hall and the Refectory. The tower is the most magnificent one, rising to a height of 180 feet and has been built without mortar. It is divided into vertical sections and horizontal ribs with every inch of the surface covered with most elaborate carvings, which relieve the flatness and monotony of the structure. On the facades are found beautiful sculptures of Parvati, Ganesa, Kartikeya and the rest, fashioned with great skill and full of life.

There are numerous minor shrines, many of which are intrinsically beautiful and have been deemed by competent critics to rank as precious gems of Orissan architecture. The first is the Mukteswara temple admired by Fergusson as "a gem of Orissan architecture". The temple abounds in beautiful sculptures of men and animals, which are repeated all around the temple in a wonderful variety of pose and action.

Fighting amazons mounted on lions, monkeys, crocodiles—these represent the various figures sculptured. There is a very powerful figure of Dancing Siva.

The Rajarani Temple is another fine temple situated in captivating surroundings. The temple contains sculptures of the Nine Planets in the architrave over the door-way. The temple originally contained, like others of this age, profuse sculptures many of which, it is said, have been removed by heartless curio-collectors. The few that remain attest to the wealth and beauty of those that adorned its walls. The figure of a girl with a most attractive smile and of the Fire God Agni, surrounded by a halo of flames, may be mentioned as characteristic specimens of the surviving sculptures.

The other temples of major importance are those of Brahmesvara dedicated to Brahma, the Meghesvara, a fine late 12th century construction, abounding in various devices of animals: stag, rhinoceros, monkey and peacock, and a solitary temple dedicated to Vishnu known as the Vasudeva temple.

The worship in the great Lingaraja Temple is on the same model as that on which it is carried on in the other celebrated Orissan temple—that of Jagannath at Puri. Elaborate rituals representing the awakening of the God at morning, his bath, his feeding and the final laying Him to rest are performed. A large number of servants and priests are employed even as in the other temple.

In and around Bhuvaneshvar lie a number of rock-cut caves known as Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves. They are partly Hindu and partly Buddhistic and Jaina, and are of great historical importance dating, as some of them do, from the centuries before the Christian era. They show how the region was very cultured even in Mauryan and pre-Mauryan times. Some of these caves like the one to Ganesa, the elephant-headed God, are still resorted to for worship and attract pilgrims.

The Hathi Gumpah or the Elephant Cave is one of the earliest found in the Udayagiri Hill and has yielded valuable inscriptions. The donor of the cave was

Kharavela, a powerful king of Kalinga (Orissa) in the 2nd century B.C., who is said "to have constructed rock-dwellings and bestowed abundant gifts upon Jain devotees". This epigraph has become historically most valuable.

Among the other caves in this hill may be mentioned the Rani Gumpha (the Queen's cave), and the Ganesa Gumpha (Ganesa's cave) which were excavated in later days, probably about the 7th century A.D. when the Kesari kings were in the ascendant. The Rani Gumpha is said to have been excavated for and inhabited by the Kesari king Lalendra's Queen. It is a large and spacious cave, comprising two sets of rooms on three sides of a quadrangular court. Buddhistic traces are visible in this cave and its friezes. A much discussed frieze in the upper storey of this cave, containing a well-carved scene, has been surmised to represent an episode in the conquest of Ceylon by Vijaya.

The Ganesa Gumpha cave consists of two rooms and is reached by a flight of 4 steps flanked by finely carved elephants.

holding lotuses. There are interesting sculptures of women-warriors and fights.

One cave, a curious specimen of architecture dating probably from the Buddhistic and Jain period, may be referred to—a cave cut to resemble a tiger whose expanded jaws with a row of fearsome teeth constitute a verandah with a door-way located in the gullet.

The Khandagiri hill contains quite a number of caves as interesting as those of the Udayagiri. They are all Buddhistic or Jaina. Of them the Latghara may be referred to. It contains figures of the Jain Thirthankaras. The figure of Rishaba Deva, the first of the series, is finely modelled and is a truly noble piece of sculpture. Bhuvaneshwar has also sacred tanks. The most sacred is the one known as Vindu Sagara or Bindu Sardhar. It is said to measure 1,500 feet by 700 feet and to have an average depth of 6 to 10 feet. It is reputed to possess the combined sacredness of all the holy rivers and tanks of India and hence is largely resorted to by pilgrims. These are best described by Fergusson and R. D. Banerji in their well-known works on Indian architecture and Orissa respectively.

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## Konarak

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**T**HE temple of Konarak is dedicated to the Sun God (Surya) and is the most famous of its kind. It is one of the most celebrated monuments of Hindu religion. It is the glory of Orissan architecture.

The legend connected with the origin of the temple to the Sun is as follows:—Samba, one of the sons of God Krishna, once incurred the wrath of sage Narada and the latter, in order to revenge himself on him and punish the lad, hit upon a device. He lured Samba to a bathing ghat where Krishna's wives were disporting themselves and immediately poisoned Krishna's ears by saying that the son Samba was there amidst them with malicious intent and that the ladies had been fascinated with him and had transferred their affections to him. Krishna, without waiting to know the truth, cursed Samba with leprosy. An,

outcast and a prey to fell disease, Samba wandered disconsolate and alone in the forests until one day his luck changed; for Krishna learnt that the story of his son's guilt was not true and regretted his own action. He then advised his son to propitiate Surya who alone could cure him. Samba did accordingly and, after twelve years' hard and long penance, was rewarded in the Maitreya forest (round about Konarak) with an apparition of the Sun God. One day as Samba rose from a bath in the waters of the Chandrabagha river, he noticed opposite to him the figure of the Sun on a lotus leaf. He immediately built a magnificent temple on the spot and was rid of his curse and disease.

Historically, the main temple was erected in the ninth century A.D. by the Kesari kings of Orissa, who were ardent Saiva worshippers. An additional structure, the Natya Mandir (Hall for Dancing), with its refined sculptures was added about 1241 A.D. by the Gangetic king, Narasimha Deva. It is said that some 1200 artisans worked for 16 long

years at the construction of this wonder-shrine. As a proof of the immense labour and devotion involved, it may be mentioned that the metal used, chlorite, which defies time and weather, was brought from the Nilgiri hills in South India, several hundreds of miles away.

Like all the Orissan temples, the Sun-temple is raised upon an exuberant and marvellous plinth. Upon it stood the vimana or the towered sanctuary containing the image of the deity, together with Jagmohana, the Audience-chamber. These two were so constructed as to represent the traditional chariot of the Sun. The sculptor has fashioned 7 horses and 24 wheels, each wheel with a diameter of 9 ft. 8 in. and containing eight thick and eight thin spokes. Many of the wheels are broken but those that remain are said to rival in their elaborate design the famous cart-wheels of Sicily. The medallions on the axle feature Lakshmi with a pair of elephants pouring water over her head, as she rises from the cosmic ocean, seated on Brahma's lotus flower. Professor Havell says of

the horses and their workmanship: "If the horse of Konarak had by chance been labelled 'Roman' or 'Greek', this magnificent work of art would now be the pride of some metropolitan museum in Europe or America. . . . Visions of the Mahabharata, the clash of battle in heroic ages, and memories of the past triumphs of Indian chivalry must have inspired the sculptor of this noble figure and his prancing, war-harnessed steed, pacing grandly forward over their prostrate foes. Here Indian sculptors have shown that they can express with as much fire and passion as the greatest European art, the pride of victory and the glory of triumphant warfare; for not even the Homeric grandeur of the Elgin marbles surpasses the magnificent movement and modelling of this Indian Achilles, and the superbly monumental war-horse in its massive strength and vigour is not unworthy of comparison with Verochchio's famous master-piece at Venice." The elephants on the northern side of the temple are of the same high workmanship. Then there are the lions,

magnificently carved, which have a great interest as they are the symbolic emblems of the conquering Kesaris of Orissa who built this and other temples.

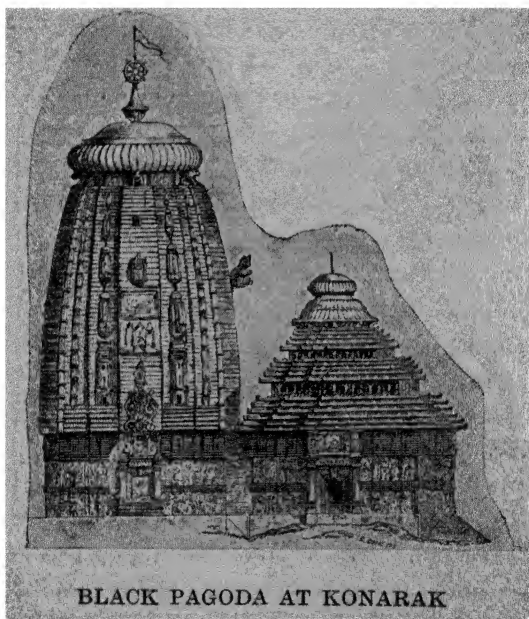
Apart from its architectural beauty and grandeur, the temple is famous for the beauty and plethora of its sculptures. The figures of Surya, found on the three sides of the temple, north, south and west, symbolic probably of the morning, midday and evening Sun, in the guise of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Siva the Destroyer, are all superb and radiate the joy of life and warmth. They are exquisitely carved with details and ornaments all complete and are as fresh to-day as when they emerged from the sculptor's chisel. The best account of the temple is that given by Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra; W. W. Hunter gives a charming description of it in the 1st volume of his famous work—"Orissa" (1872). "Its luscious ornamentation forms at once the glory and the disgrace of Orissa art."

The great architectural skill displayed, the beauty and profusion of its sculptures

and the magnificent setting of the temple with the sea on the one side and forests on the other, over which all it dominates with a solemn grandeur, have impressed all who have seen it since it was built. Abul Fazl wrote in his 'Ain-i-Akbari': "Near Jagannath is a temple dedicated to the Sun. Its cost was defrayed by twelve years' revenue of the province. Even those whose judgment is critical and who are difficult to please, stand astonished at its sight. The wall is 150 cubits high and 19 thick. It has three portals. The eastern has carved upon it the figures of two finely designed elephants, each of them carrying a man upon its trunk. The western bears sculptures of two horsemen with trappings and ornaments and an attendant. The northern has two tigers, each of which is rampant upon an elephant that it has overpowered. In front is an octagonal column of black stone, 50 yards high. When nine flights of steps are passed, a spacious court appears with a large arch of stone, upon which are carved the Sun and other planets.

Around them are a variety of worshippers of every class, each after its manner, with bowed heads, standing, sitting, prostrated, laughing, weeping, lost in amaze, or wrapt in attention, and following these are strange animals which never existed but in imagination. It is said that somewhat over 730 years ago, Raja Narasing Deo completed this stupendous fabric and left this mighty memorial to posterity."

The Europeans, too, well knew the temple and admired it under the name of the Black Pagoda—a designation coined by the English seamen; for at a distance the structure appears black as pitch in marked contrast to Puri's temple, the white Pagoda, a few miles further down on the sea-coast. Sir John Marshall writes: "There is no monument of Hinduism, I think, that is at once so stupendous and so perfectly proportioned as the Black Pagoda and none which leaves so deep an impression on the memory. When Fergusson wrote of it so admiringly, he had seen but half its beauty. The deep and richly carved basement, with



BLACK PAGODA AT KONARAK



the horses and chariots of the Sungod, had not been unearthed in his day, nor were traces visible of the massive Dancing Hall in front, which makes such a splendid addition to the main building." It is said that within the temple's solid deep-chested masonry was lodged a lode-stone, which attracted sailors but, whether it is true or not, the tower has always as a beautiful and imposing landmark to all mariners on the Bay of Bengal.

This temple, so magnificently reared and at such expense and labour by the devout Kesari kings, long hummed with numerous festivals and worship. Ancient palm-leaf records assert that there were twelve great annual festivals, of which the most important was celebrated in the native month magh (January-February). Vast numbers of pilgrims crowded in the temple and on the sea-coast to witness them. There were vast endowments left by kings to celebrate the festivals. But there came, with the advent of the Moslems, a great catastrophe on the temple. The kalasa of the temple was stolen, according to tradition, by

Mahomedan sailors who, lured to the Pagoda by its fateful lodestone, attacked the sanctuary and transported the magnet. According to the chronicles kept in the Jagannath temple at Puri, about the middle of the 16th century, the renegade Hindu, Kalapahar, attempted to pull down the temple, but, being unable to accomplish his object, stole the Khalasa and thereby inflicted the greatest damage in his power. The temple and the whole sanctuary were defiled; the image's holiness was put an end to; its festivals and worship ceased; and the glory of the 'Black Pagoda' was past and done with.

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## Puri

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PURI is one of the most famous and long-established places of pilgrimage in India. It is sacred to Vishnu and is known to every hamlet and town in India as the abode of Jagannath 'the Lord of the World'.

The city and the temple are set in beautiful surroundings. Surrounded by waving rice-fields on three sides and the sea on the east, Puri lies in the delta of the Mahanadi. The temple which Tavernier, the French traveller of the 17th century, knew as the most celebrated pagoda of India, dominates the country around. Especially in rainy July when the air is clear and translucent, the pale-tinted tower of the temple, rising 192 feet in height, surmounted by the wheel and trident of Vishnu, affords a most inspiring and noble sight for miles around.

The blue-stone image of Vishnu, worshipped in the temple was, according to tradition, discovered about 818 A.D. in the jungle and brought to Puri. The worship of the image was several times threatened

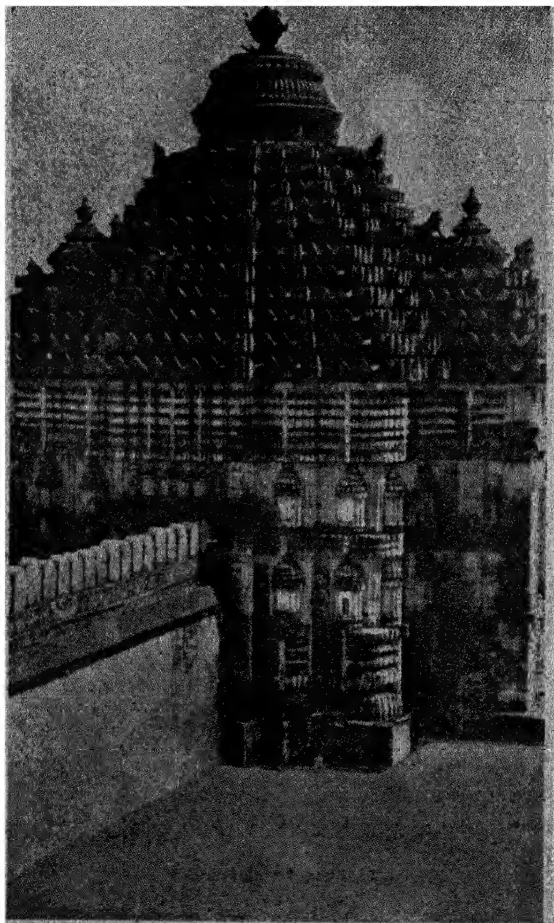
with danger by pirates from the sea or the Moslem cavalry, when the first thing the people did was to save their god by burying him in a neighbouring lake. The great temple which now stands was a product of the twelfth century and later than the shrine of Konarak. It was constructed by a Choda Ganga king. It was fourteen years in building and cost incredible lakhs of rupees. It has always been a wealthy foundation and in the 18th and 19th centuries when the Bengal Vaishnava movement was at its height, its revenues were enormous.

The temple is in the form of a square 652 feet long by 630 feet broad. The interior is protected by a massive stone wall 20 feet high. Within; there are about 120 . shrines dedicated to the various divinities of the Hindu Pantheon. But the central and the greatest is the one dedicated to Jagannath. Its conical tower rises to a height of 192 feet and is very majestic and imposing. Opposite the principal entrance or Lion Gate in the square where pilgrims throng, there is an exquisite monolithic pillar which stood for

centuries before the Sun-temple at Konarak and had been removed to this shrine. Inside the temple there are four chambers or Halls—the hall of offerings, a pillared hall for the musicians and dancing-girls, the hall of audience and the sanctuary itself containing the images of Jagannath, his brother Balaram and sister Subadhra.

The temple is served by a huge establishment consisting of pandas (priests), attendants of the most varied duties, decorators of the images, cooks, grooms, nautch-girls, and artisans. They are organised in 36 orders and 97 classes, with the local Raja of Khurdah, belonging to a very old Orissan family, as the lay-head of the whole temple and exemplifying the principle of *noblesse oblige* by holding in his hereditary capacity the meanest of all offices, that of sweeper to the lord of the world.

Jagannath is Vishnu the Preserver, is the most benign and All-Loving Divinity. He is the God of the people and hence his undying hold upon the Hindu race. Here in the city and temple of Jagannath there is no distinction of high or low, priest



THE TEMPLE OF JAGANNATH

or peasant, rich or poor, Brahmin or outcaste. They all stand together, worship and pray in common. In the courts of the temple and outside the Lion Gate, thousands of pilgrims join every year in the sacrament of eating the holy food (prasada), the sanctity of which overleaps all barriers of caste, and a Puri priest will receive food even from a low-caste Hindu. Jagannath stands for ever as the symbol of Divine Love and the embodiment of the Gospel of Equality which has been preached by hundreds of Hindu saints and missionaries to the wretched and down-trodden in the villages of India. Hence the never-ceasing pilgrimage to Puri and the great devotion and worship of its deity evokes in the hearts of the people. As long as Jagannath's towers rise on Puri sands, so long will there be in India a perpetual and visible protest of the equality of man before God. His apostles penetrate to every hamlet of Hindustan preaching the sacrament of the Holy Food. The worship of Jagannath aims at "a catholicism which embraces every form

of Indian belief and every Indian conception of the Deity”

Twenty-four festivals are held every year; the Car festival, famed throughout the world, takes place in June or July and is the most important. Jagannath and his brother and sister, represented by wooden images, are mounted on huge cars and dragged by pious multitudes across the broad and beautiful thoroughfares that stretches in front of the temple to the deity's Garden House. The great car, in which Jagannath is carried, is 45 feet in height, 35 feet square and is supported on 16 wheels of 7 feet diameter. The deity's brother and sister have cars a few feet smaller. When the sacred images are brought forth and placed on their chariots, pilgrims fall on their knees and bow their foreheads in the dust. The vast multitude then shouts with one throat and, surging to and fro, drags the wheeled chariots along the broad street. The multitude includes many privileged drawers of the car, who hold parcels of land in the district, free of rent in return for this hereditary service. Music



strikes up, cymbals and drums are sounded, the priests shout from the cars and hired singers chant to induce the crowd to pull the cars vigorously. The distance from the temple to the Garden House is about 4 miles and though the road is level, of a good red laterite surface, on account of the rains and the heavy structure of the cars and the sandy nature of the road in places, the procession takes several days to end. The festival is vastly attended and constitutes one of the most cherished celebrations to the peoples of Bengal and Orissa.

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